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ABSTRACT

This publication provides materials on the Small Group Learning Methodology Project in Victoria, Australia. The first chapter concerns the purpose of small groups in adult literacy learning. Chapter 2 deals with types of adult literacy programs, interviews, student needs, student placement, and forming groups. Chapter 3 discusses group processes, including the tutor's role and group organization. Chapter 4 presents case studies of six groups. "Experimenting with Structure: News and Music" (Barbara Goulborn) describes a beginner literacy group, which used a new approach that emphasized reading. "Women's Group in a Neighbourhood House" (Helena Spyrou) discusses planning done on the basis of continuing student evaluation formalized by a brief survey at the end of each class session. "From Reading to Writing to Reading" (Aileen Treloar) establishes a rationale for the approach and describes a session involving the share/reading of a classic story. "Developing the Writing Habit" (Kaye Elias) discusses a group that was introduced to new genres and worked on the conventions of writing. "Getting Started with a Beginner Reading Group" (Rosa McKenna) describes two cycles of lessons. "Experience and Language--Towards a Balanced Diet" (Rex Ennis) describes a first-hand experience in shopping and cooking that integrated literacy, numeracy, language, and experience. Chapter 5 is an annotated bibliography of 26 references. (YLB)

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A LIFE OF ITS OWN

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Adult Literacy Work in a Small Group

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WORKPLACE BASIC EDUCATION PROJECT

Cover photographs by Carolyn Lewens

A Life Of Its Own

ADULT LITERACY WORK IN A SMALL GROUP

Rex Ennis, *Project Officer*

Deborah Davison, *Project Co-ordinator*

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INTRODUCTION

The WORKPLACE BASIC EDUCATION PROJECT has been in operation since late 1984. As the Project grew and the number of classes increased, so did the need for appropriately trained and experienced tutors. In the early stages there were few available adult literacy group tutors, partly because much of the adult literacy provision in Victoria had been through volunteer tutors. One of the early Project activities was the commencement of training of tutors for Workplace classes. Some of those tutors also worked or went on to work as group tutors with other adult literacy and basic education providers.

Tutor training and induction for Workplace classes has continued regularly since and in that time the need for group tutors for a wider range of adult literacy and basic education providers has grown. So has the number of paid jobs in the field. During this time also Workplace has worked in co-operation with other providers and workers and Workplace staff members have been active in the work of the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council.

It is in this context that Workplace tendered for the Small Group Learning Methodology Project. The Workplace proposal involved:

(i) the establishment of a Strategies Development Group made up of experienced group tutors from a range of adult literacy providers

(ii) employment of a Project Officer

(iii) preparation of the first draft of a range of session plans for tutors of small adult literacy groups

(iv) successive trialling of the materials with tutors already working with or beginning to work with small groups

(v) preparation of a final draft together with printing and distribution of the material across the State.

This publication is the last stage in carrying out the proposal.

OVERVIEW

A fundamental question for adult literacy tutors is the relationship between teaching and learning and the roles of tutors and students.

In our early meetings to shape the project we talked at length about our own experiences and beliefs about adult literacy provision. From these discussions we developed some particular ideas to guide us:

- Theory and practice are inseparable.
- Adult literacy work takes place in a wide range of contexts: different groups, locations, students, tutors, etc.
- There is no one 'right track', no single formula, in working with small adult literacy groups. Considered decisions have to be made to fit approaches to contexts and needs.
- The contexts in which small groups operate should be made explicit. Factors may be physical, social, personal and philosophical.
- Early writing and reading development should be featured.
- Reading and writing acquisition, resources for teaching and learning, group dynamics, how adults learn, evaluation and curriculum development should be presented in the context of 'groups in action'.
- A flexible and experimental approach is essential to meet students' needs and to ensure continuing professional development.

In the past most of the adult literacy work in Victoria has been done by volunteer tutors working individually with students, often in private settings. This was a response to a particular social need at a particular time. Social, political and educational conditions have changed leading to the gradual introduction of small group tuition for adults wanting help with reading and writing. Chapter One answers the question 'Why Have Small Groups in Adult Literacy Learning?' Chapter Two, 'Establishing and Maintaining Small Groups', deals with types of adult literacy programs, interviews, student needs, placement of students within the program and forming groups. Chapter Three, 'Operating Small Groups', discusses group processes, including the role of the tutor and organising the group.

The main part of the book, 'Some Small Groups in Operation', presents six groups covering a range of contexts: community programs, TAFE colleges and workplaces. The students come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs. Throughout the accounts of these groups in action you will find common concerns for using the group experience to meet individual needs. But you will also hear the distinctive voices of the tutors reflecting the diversity of practice. The six groups are:

1. ***Barbara Goulborn's*** 'beginner literacy' group at Broadmeadows TAFE College. Barbara calls her account EXPERIMENTING WITH STRUCTURE: NEWS AND MUSIC because her approach was a significant departure from the way she had operated with previous groups. She explains why she decided on a new approach and how she operated the group and includes the class materials she used.

2. ***Helena Spyrou's,*** WOMEN'S GROUP IN A NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE operates in a different context from the other accounts. Her planning is done on the basis of continuing student evaluation formalised by a brief survey at the end of each session of this day time class.

3. FROM READING TO WRITING TO READING is the story of a group ***Aileen Treloar*** worked with in the Council of Adult Education, Access Department. Aileen establishes a rationale for her approach and then describes a particular session involving the share/reading of a classic story together with some of the individual student responses that arose from it.

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4. Although ***Kaye Elias'*** group did not include any 'beginner readers or writers' as in the other accounts her group was made up largely of people who ***could*** write but didn't. For practical purposes they were mostly non-writers. So while introducing her Workplace group to new genres and working on the conventions of writing, Kaye's prime concern was in DEVELOPING THE WRITING HABIT.

5. ***Rosa McKenna's*** GETTING STARTED WITH A BEGINNER READING GROUP at Footscray TAFE College describes two cycles of lessons. Rosa also continues the discussion started by Barbara on the issue of the choice of texts for use in groups and includes class materials.

6. EXPERIENCE AND LANGUAGE – TOWARDS A BALANCED DIET is the title of ***Rex Ennis'*** account of a single session which involved group language-experience work. First hand experiences in shopping and cooking integrate literacy, numeracy, language and experience.

Chapter One

WHY HAVE SMALL GROUPS FOR ADULT LITERACY LEARNING?

SMALL GROUPS OR ONE-TO-ONE LEARNING?

We learn in small groups, big groups, from our friends and family, on our own, and in huge public forums such as rallies and rock concerts. Sometimes we plan our learning, sometimes we pick things up by chance. In a single day we can move in and out of small group learning, one-to-one learning, and learning on our own, many times. The issue is not one-to-one tuition versus small group learning. Learning to be literate is complex. Many students will need to move between one-to-one learning and small group learning for much of their literacy learning. They will also have to learn on their own. Both students and tutors must be able to discern what is appropriate at different times and for different purposes. They will also need to recognise the power of informal, personal learning.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ONE-TO-ONE LEARNING

One-to-one learning ensures that individuals' learning needs are the only focus of their tutor's attention. Mistakes are private. Frightened and insecure students feel safer. The learner gets more of a teacher's time and the learner can't hide behind others to avoid work that seems difficult. However, when this kind of learning is the only option, some disadvantages emerge. Literacy learning is often a prolonged experience for adults and success can be longed for intensely. This can create a relationship between learner and tutor, which traps both of them. In addition, one-to-one relationships, used as the only vehicle for literacy learning, are fundamentally exclusive of others, and have the potential to isolate the learner in a state of dependency on the tutor.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUP LEARNING

Group learning doesn't take place when a group of people sit passively listening to a teacher talking to them. That's a form of one-to-one learning, and a restricted one at that. Group learning is much more than a collection of individuals sharing the same space. The group becomes an integral part of learning. Each student learns through and in the group in a rich and complex pattern of interaction. This will always be the case if the group:

- has a defined membership
- thinks of itself as a group
- shares a purpose
- satisfies needs through interdependence
- leads individuals to grow through expanding group goals
- interacts and communicates with each member
- influences each member
- makes decisions and acts as one
- allows individuals to move between learning in the whole group and its parts, including one-to-one interaction

In other words the group takes on **A LIFE OF ITS OWN.**

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FROM GROUPS

We need to interact with others and small groups allow us to direct our emotions outwards. The reaction of others is important for our full emotional expression. Each other person will draw out different facets of our personality – indeed our interaction with them actually creates these facets. In part our psychological needs are met through the recognition we get from others. If we aren't recognised and acknowledged we suffer from psychological solitary confinement. A group gives us more than a good time. It allows us to identify, share, and act with others. Our association with like

minded people, for a common purpose, confirms our 'selves'. Groups are places where values, attitudes and beliefs are created and upheld. They are also places where our values are clarified, discussed, challenged and changed.

LEARNING ABOUT DEMOCRACY

All Australian citizens have responsibilities as members of a democractic society. The capacity to function in a group is one of the building blocks of democracy. The degree of our involvement varies (often according to the size of the group) but the ability to agree, disagree, speak out, survive conflict, recognise power and powerlessness, and to understand what's happening in groups can all be learnt. We are empowered if we can identify group manipulation and intimidation, and if we can develop strategies to draw on the contribution of all members to resist intimidation. The aspects of groups often deemed negative can be the building blocks of maturity and growth in individuals.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Many literacy students need the educational support of a group to be successful. Groups magnify and electrify the development of ideas. Communication about ideas is at the heart of small group literacy learning. Since talking, listening, writing and reading are interrelated, the spoken word interacts with the written word. One person's writing is another person's reading. Groups create opportunities for learners to experience and observe the learning of others. Tutors can make this process explicit and develop awareness of a range of learning patterns as they happen. We learn from our own success amd failure. Others learn by seeing us learn. By providing a variety of opportuniites for all group members (including the tutor) to teach and learn, power relationships are significantly altered. For literacy students, small groups break down isolation and stigma; those who discover they are not alone often discover a catalyst for confidence to act in new ways.

Many of us find that certain goals can only be set and achieved in groups. We need small groups, as well as one-to-one and solitary learning to fully develop our literacy.

When difference and diversity are welcome and accommodated small group learning is rich and inclusive. Paradoxically group learning assists individuals towards one of the most powerful one-to-one learning experiences of all: when the voice of the writer is heard in the mind of the reader. This is a prime goal of adult literacy.

Chapter Two
ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING GROUPS

In this chapter we describe the context in which adult literacy groups operate. We discuss the process of forming a group and the decision-making involved in operating a group.

Within Victoria adult literacy is provided in a range of locations and types of programs:

1. TAFE colleges offer both small groups and larger classes. Some also offer one to one volunteer programs.
2. The Council of Adult Education provides small group tuition in a city location and in work places in Melbourne and some Victorian country areas.
3. Community Programs, in Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses, provide one to one volunteers and small group tuition.
4. Some local libraries host one to one volunteer provision and an increasing number of small groups.
5. Provision occurs in other settings such as Prisons and Correction Centres.

These settings vary greatly in their physical resources, accessibility, funding and atmosphere. Adult literacy workers have encouraged this diversity. Formal classrooms in large institutions suit some people; a quiet room in a community house suits others. In the best of all worlds, maximum choices would exist for everyone. In reality choice is usually limited.

Once a student approaches an Adult Literacy Program an initial interview is an essential early step in the process which might lead to placement. It is preferable for the interview to be conducted by the person who is likely to teach the student and on occasions it may occur as an early class activity but it is more likely to be done by a Program Co-ordinator. A detailed written record is especially necessary where the interview is not conducted by the person who will work directly with the student. At the interview the student should be assured of confidentiality and should retain the initiative in explaining his or her intentions in coming to the program. The interview, as the student's first contact with the program, should set the tone for the student's future involvement.

The key question about placement is: WHAT ARE THE STUDENT'S INTENTIONS IN COMING TO THE PROGRAM? These can be expressed as general aspirations and/or specific requirements. They may be stated directly or be inferred from other comments but they should be brought out in discussion with the student and identified as clearly as possible.

It takes a sensitive and skilled person to conduct such an interview. The interviewer will be able:

- to listen
- to put a student at ease
- to elicit the student's real needs and intentions if these are not stated directly by the student
- to clarify the options for the student both in this program and other accessible programs
- to understand writing and reading processes and purposes.

Using these skills the interviewer identifies:

- the student's intentions or purposes in approaching the adult literacy program
- what reading and writing the student can already do
- the student's ability to explain how s/he goes about reading and writing
- the purposes for which the student reads and writes and his/her awareness of how these relate to the wider world
- the student's expectations of student and tutor roles.

Some of the questions the interviewer will be seeking to answer are:

1. Student's intentions

- Why has the student come to the program?
- What does the student want to get out of the program?

These may appear to be long term aims:

"I want to be able to read real books"

"My kids are nearly school age and I want to be able to help them"

or short term aims:

"I need help to fill out bank forms"

"I want to be able to read job advertisements and complete the application forms"

Whether the intention can be met in the long or short term will depend upon the nature of the need. It is important to recognise that these intentions may change. As the student's progress continues new possibilities will emerge.

2. Demonstration of what the student can already do

These questions help to focus on what a student can do and wants to be able to do rather than what the student can't do. The chart below will assist students and interviewers in discussing these questions and those that follow:

- For what purposes does the student already use reading and writing
- How does the student go about reading?
- How does the student approach the task of writing?

Where and why do people read and write?

COMMUNICATION FOR:

REASONS	CONTEXTS	LOCATIONS	SITUATIONS
information	personal	at home	alone
interest	social	at work	with others:
enjoyment	work-related	in community	– older
recreation		at large:	– younger
exploration		– bank	– peers
critical interpretation		– shop	– colleagues
empowerment		– library	– family
functional		– car	– supervisors
creative outlet		– club	
explore feelings		– meeting	
		– beach	
		– public transport	
		– sporting events	
		– theatre	
		– cinema	

writing

PURPOSES

diaries
letters: personal, business/formal
cards
recipes
lists
invitations
instructions
notes and memos
reports: daily,weekly, monthly;
accidents, problems,
investigations
comprehensive forms:
bank, taxation, medicare, insurance,
hire purchase, questionnaires
functional reading:
catalogues,street signs,
advertisements,
timetables, newspapers,
street directories, maps, D.I.Y. books,
phone book, labels,
magazines,
charts & diagrams
study, reference and research:
summaries, outlines,
note taking, essays
assignments,
exams,
poetry, plays,

reading

3. Student's understanding of reading and writing processes and purposes

The important issue here is how the student goes about reading and writing in real life rather than when 'under scrutiny' in class or during an interview.

- Is the student able to explain how s/he goes about reading and writing?
- Can the student use appropriate language to describe elements of the reading/writing processes?
- Is the student aware of the purposes for which people read and write?
- Is the student anxious to broaden her/his own range of purposes?

4. Student's and tutor's role expectations

There is a power relationship between tutors and students. Implicit in this relationship are unexamined assumptions about roles. A process of negotiation may allow both to feel comfortable with the challenge to learn and grow. Where to start in these negotiations will depend on the following questions:

- What does the student see as her/his role in learning to read and write?
- Who does the student think should make the decisions about what to learn and how to learn?
- What does s/he see as the tutor's role?
- Who makes the decisions about how and what to teach?
- Who decides upon approaches and activities?
- What past experiences has the student had as a learner?
- Who does the student see as responsible for 'setting homework' and seeing that work between sessions is done?

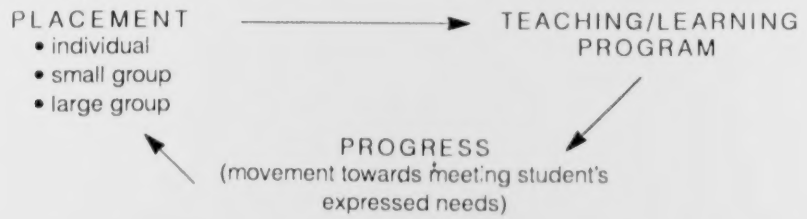
There is a large range of other issues, attributes, attitudes and previous experiences that need to be investigated and recorded at the interview in order for appropriate decisions to be made about the student's future. Some of these are listed in later sections of the book. Through all of this the interviewer's intention will be to both gather information and give information to help the student make decisions about future involvement in adult literacy provision. The interview form should be a shared document needing the student's approval and in sharing the completion of the form the student may be encouraged to ask questions too.

The interviewer needs to find out about the student's past educational experience, any known psychological, emotional, social, intellectual or physical problems, but should be primarily intent on establishing the student's present needs.

If the Adult Literacy Program is a large one there may be choices available for meeting students' needs:

individual work small group membership large group membership.

These options do not exist in all programs. In some programs there may be no choice. Sometimes it may be advisable to refer a student with specific needs to another program where provision may be more appropriate. Continuation of a student in a particular type of provision (say a small group) also depends upon the student's emerging needs. In fact there should be an ongoing monitoring of the cycle below, involving the student, the tutor and the program co-ordinator:



Students approach Adult Literacy Programs at any time of the year. The process of interview and placement is continuous. Consequently group membership can change as students enter and leave the program.

Decisions about the composition of a group take into account student needs, program practicalities and issues such as the following.

1. Identified Groups

The class may cater to learners with specific needs (women, bilingual learners, people with disabilities, or the disadvantaged etc.). At the same time program co-ordinators should be aware of the principles of integration and will have to decide if and why a special group is necessary.

2. Desired Outcomes

The class may have a specific purpose (road rules, budgeting, job search skills, etc.).

3. Geographic Issues

Group membership is influenced by geographic location.

4. Available Resources

The formation of a group is influenced by funding, available space, size of rooms, access to equipment and the availability of suitable tutors.

5. Time Availability

Matching students' preferred times with tutor's times with available space may be difficult.

6. Individual Differences

Too wide a range of personalities, needs, intentions, interests or abilities may make a group unworkable.

When all of the above factors are considered the result wil still be a group of MIXED ABILITY, MIXED NEEDS, MIXED INTENTION AND MIXED INTERESTS.

However, compatibility and group cohesion are still possible. In fact, diversity can be a positive factor in the life of a group as long as these two linked questions are kept in mind.

What is good for the group?

What is good for the individual?

The tutor and program co-ordinator will both need to be particularly flexible and plan with these questions in mind especially because of continuous enrolment.

FUNDING:

In the past Adult Literacy Programs have operated in a context of uncertain funding. Even the programs within TAFE colleges with permanent teaching and co-ordinating staff have been subject to cut-backs and changing priorities. In Community-based Programs uncertainty of funding has been a way of life. It is to be hoped that recent Victorian Government budget initiatives will ensure the stable operation of programs and that small groups run by paid tutors will be assured of on-going funding.

Funding dictates which groups operate and their duration. The usual arrangement with volunteer tutors was for the working pair to meet once a week for two hours though this was flexible to meet student and tutor circumstances. The "once a week for two hours" arrangement also became the most common arrangement for small groups. This is still the case though longer and more frequent classes now take place and the movement towards meeting the urgent need for full time provision should become more possible in the near future. Weekend Workshops and Summer Schools are adding to the range of options available.

In many programs groups are run by a single tutor. In some, most commonly Community Programs, volunteer tutors work alongside paid tutors. This can lead to a very flexible arrangement within the group leading to a combination of group and individual activity. Similarly, team teaching arrangements allow for a more diverse range of organisation within the group.

EVALUATION:

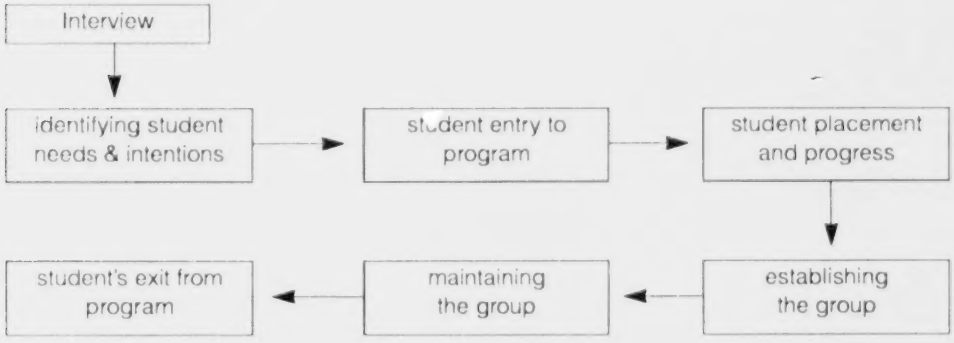
Constant evaluation and monitoring in the sense of 'keeping check and taking stock' must be an integral part of the operation of literacy classes and programs. Students need to take an active part in this along with tutors and program co-ordinators. Some evaluation is quantitative (how many students? how many classes? how much money? what resources?). In other cases, especially students' progress, the evaluation documents quality of outcomes (what specific progress? how much progress? how satisfied? are expressed needs being met?).

Evaluation is essential for four inter-related, though different, reasons:

1. to give the student feedback
2. to give the tutor feedback
3. to respond to student progress
4. to demonstrate that funds are being well spent and what funds are needed.

SUMMARY:

The process of establishing and maintaining groups can be summarised as follows:



Evaluation takes place throughout this process.

Chapter Three
OPERATING SMALL GROUPS

There is no 'correct' way for a group to function. However, certain behaviour is more conducive to learning, certain situations more positive for individuals, certain actions make group life more satisfying. Tutors and students need to be aware of the important aspects of group life if groups are to function well for learning purposes. Understanding group process assists learning.

Group Process means:

WHAT is done in the group, ie , the *tasks* that individuals or the group want to achieve,

HOW things are done in the group including how the task is achieved, how decisions are made, how the *group is maintained*, how the individuals interact with each other and

WHY tasks are selected and why the group is maintained. Individual and group *needs* drive the maintenance of the group and determine the tasks.

As these three aspects of group life interact continually, tutors need to balance the emphasis and appropriateness of each at different times. Certain behaviour assists in accomplishing the tasks whilst other behaviour is required to build relationships in the group and maintain the group as a working unit. The trick is to accomplish the tasks in such a way as to simultaneously build relationships in the group and maintain the group as a cohesive unit.

Getting the task done requires:

- Initiation – defining the task, providing ways and ideas for getting started,
- Knowledge, information and opinion giving and seeking – facts, past experiences, opinions, resources. Stating beliefs, and suggesting ideas. Asking and supporting others to do the same,
- Co-ordination – linking information and ideas, relating these to group or individual goals,
- Clarification – interpreting and expanding ideas and information to the group. Restating and ordering information to clear confusion,
- Evaluation and summarising – gauging where the group or individual is in relationship to goals. Providing the whole view . Offering a conclusion on what has been achieved and what remains to be done.

Maintaining the group requires:

- Norm setting – helping to set ground rules,
- Encouraging – accepting that others' contribution is worthwhile,
- Gatekeeping – keeping communication open and fair, allowing all group members to have a turn,
- Harmonising – reconciling or mediating disagreements whilst assisting group members to explore and understand differences,
- Compromising – adapting and modifying ideas,
- Expressing feelings – expressing your feelings and encouraging others to express theirs. Development of an understanding of different feelings and reactions.

To promote learning in a group the following need to be considered:

1. Preparation
2. Participation
3. Communication
4. Standards of behaviour
5. Group goals
6. Group cohesion
7. Organisation

1. Preparation

Before the group meets there are certain things to be done and thought about:

1.1 How well are members prepared for the group?

The following information may help students to feel more comfortable in a group:

- exactly where the group meets and how to get there
- name/s of tutor and some background information
- what to bring
- how long the group is expecting to meet
- the names of others in the group
- how long the group has been meeting already
- how the group will function.

Many adult literacy groups operate with a free flowing membership – students join or leave the group at different times – a bit like an axe that 'lives' for 100 years – with five new handles and two new heads! Tutors need to prepare new students for membership of an existing group whilst also encouraging the group members to prepare themselves for a new student. For many students the negative influence of school experiences requires mention. Explanation that the group will function differently from school is important. Discussions on school experiences can be helpful in clarifying students' expectations and learning needs.

1.2 What are the students' expectations of the group and their role in it?

Students have different expectations of themselves, other students, groups, teachers, colleges and community centres. The tutor also has expectations. When expectations are ill-matched learning is restricted. For example if the tutor expects, however gently, students to participate in the group and contribute to group discussions but the student expects to be a passive recipient of knowledge the mis-match can create confusion, despair, anger or anxiety.

1.3 What is the composition of the group (members' previous experience, links between members, common ground between members, and other selection criteria)?

Learning in groups can be helped by grouping students with like needs, abilities, expectations and interests. Shared awareness of the composition of the group and the backgrounds of individual members facilitates communication. Individual differences can be a positive force in group interaction.

1.4 What physical arrangements have been made for the group?

Is the setting conducive to learning with flexibility for various teaching approaches : for example, smaller groups, informal breaks, use of concrete aids. The setting for group learning should be comfortable, versatile and non-threatening.

Available space also needs to be regarded as flexible in order to suit activities. Additional or specialist spaces (a kitchen, a resource collection, individual study carrels) may be used for some activities. Consider the possibility of moving out of the regular room. Within that regular room the configuration of furniture should suit the activity being undertaken.

For each part of each session the question that needs consideration is 'What is the most appropriate use of space and furniture for this activity?'

2. Participation

The challenge for group tutors is to ensure that each student participates fully. The *quality* of participation is the issue, although tutors should also ask themselves questions about the *quantity* of participation to ensure sound educational practices.

2.1 How much of the talking is done by the tutor, how much by the students? How much by women students, how much by men?

Students or tutor doing all the talking is not educationally sound. It has been suggested that tutors talk much more than they think they do. The balance between tutor's and students'

participation will vary with different activities, different goals and at different times. For the full participation of women students in mixed gender groups, tutors will often need to employ strategies to ensure equity of 'air space'. It may be useful to monitor the length and number of contributions of both men and women – then act appropriately on the findings.

2.2 Who are questions and comments addressed to – the tutor, particular members in the group, the total group?

If students are to learn through other group members by being aware of each other's learning needs and styles then questioning each other is an important aspect of group learning. In gaining literacy skills the ability to learn how to learn is essential. This will be possible if the tutor demonstrates the skills and encourages students to ask questions, comment and make suggestions.

2.3 Do members who don't talk a lot seem to be interested and actively listening?

Active listening is part of group learning and students need to know they are worth listening to. By acknowledging others' skills tutors can also enhance learning between students.

2.4 When is the tutor a 'leader,' when is the tutor a 'participant'? How will students know the difference?

Furniture (tables, seating, etc) can be arranged differently for a tutor led activity centred at a blackboard or demonstration than for a group discussion. The use of space will signal to the students the type of activity and the nature of their participation. The physical position of the tutor can also denote the nature of his/her role, for example 'up-front, formal, provider of information' or 'low-key, informal participant in group discussion'. Different roles at different times are essential. However, tutors always have a designated role and should not shy away from responsibility and power gained through their knowledge base.

3. Communication

People within groups communicate in various ways: verbally (by writing and talking) and non-verbally (body language). All communication is a two way process. Non-verbal communication may contradict or modify what a person is saying. Sending and receiving messages effectively is important for expressing ideas and feelings, for ensuring a flow of information, and for gaining new insights and knowledge.

3.1 Are students expressing their ideas often, clearly, easily, and with confidence?

Keeping a check on individuals in the group is important.

3.2 Do students 'pick up' and make use of contributions previously made by other students?

Students learn by listening to others' ideas. Understanding them, questioning them and building them into their own arguments are essential skills to practise in group learning.

3.3 Do students feel free to ask for clarification when they don't understand – do they ask each other? the tutor? one particular student?

Adults bring to a literacy class a wealth of information, expertise and experience. Encouraging questioning which draws on this experience benefits the total group.

3.4 Are students' statements relevant, helpful, honest and clear?

Providing situations where students can 'check out' with others how they are being understood is an important role for the tutor to undertake. Expressing opposing ideas in the group is an important skill to be developed by students.

4. Standards of behaviour

4.1 Do group members know and understand the 'code of behaviour' for this group – self discipline, responsibility, tolerance, courtesy, etc?

Group norms are set in a variety of ways. Appropriate behaviour is brought to the group from previous experiences. If these experiences are limited then inappropriate behaviour or confusion and anxiety abounds. Information encourages appropriate behaviour. When behaviour is offensive, inappropriate or obstructive to learning, the tutor has a responsibility to act and to assist others in

the group to act to understand and modify it. Establishing and maintaining norms is an ongoing process. Early in the life of the group it is important to clarify the rules, standards and behaviour which are acceptable and appropriate to the group. This need not be a moralistic stand but one which ensures that the group can achieve its educational aim.

5. Goals

5.1 How does the group arrive at its goals? Are they realistic? Are students clear about them? How do they get changed? Is there commitment to them?

An awareness of individual students' needs based on initial pre-class interviews, one-to-one discussions, group discussions and activities combine to create group goals which can be reviewed, expanded, changed or modified. Tutors should ensure that students are clear about these goals. Commitment derives from understanding and ownership. Student feedback on appropriateness of approaches, tasks and activities is gained by formal (discussion, evaluation surveys, negotiation procedures) and informal (non-verbal, incidental, intuitive, behavioural) means.

6. Group cohesion

The degree of cohesion varies from group to group and is more important in some situations. However, learning in small groups occurs best when there is trust, acceptance and 'oneness' in the group. Group atmosphere and cohesion are helped if the group standards and goals are established and recognised.

6.1 Does the group work together?

Depending upon the size of the group and the particular activity it may be appropriate to split up and re-group several times during a session. There will be times when the whole group will work together and times when pairs or threes are most appropriate and other times when individual activity is best. Strong group cohesion assists processes in the total group. It also allows for free movement in and out of different groupings without fear, anxiety or insecurity.

6.2 Are there cliques which exclude others? Should the group always be 'together'?

Sub-groups within a group are natural and helpful. However if they exclude and distract they become harmful and destructive to learning. The optimum size of the sub-group can be determined by asking, 'Can this activity best be done in the whole group, in pairs or sub-groups or by individuals?' Clearly keeping a personal diary is an individual activity though it may be done by a number of individuals simultaneously. Similarly, effective discussion requires a group, not necessarily the whole group, while giving information that is of interest to everyone is most efficiently done to the whole group.

6.3 Do pairs converse outside the main flow of group discussion?

Conversation which excludes others is annoying and counter productive. Establishing and maintaining group standards of behaviour is important. It is then a group not just a tutor concern.

6.4 Do students refer to the group as a group?

One criteria of strong group cohesion is identification with the group. If students refer to the group and not just to the tutor chances are they feel okay about the group, they will contribute to its life and gain from it.

7. Organisation:

7.1 What are the main organizational issues within a group?

Organisation within the group will depend upon the established aims and objectives for the group as well as factors such as student needs and evaluations, the context in which the group operates, available time (including student willingness to spend time out of class), available resources and constraints, such as attendance patterns.

Choices for organisation of group sessions involve these dimensions:

7.1.1 time

7.1.2 space

7.1.3 resources

7.1.4 grouping

7.1.1 Time

The structuring of time within each session can be adapted to allow changes in direction that emerge where a process of negotiation between group members exists. While the establishment of routines can be helpful to group stability and cohesion, there needs to be a willingness to change in response to emerging and immediate needs, to chance occurrences that can lead to high quality learning.

7.2.2 Space

see point 1.4, page 20

7.1.3 Resources

Resources used in working with a small group might include people, places, events or things. Resources can provide first hand experiences (visits or excursions, speakers or other visitors, real activities such as shopping, cooking or making something) or other experiences (in the form of autobiography and biography books and magazines, films and video and audio tapes, people speaking about their own experiences, etc).

Access to these resources may occur in the regular meeting room or beyond in the wider community. Resources may be selected or created by the tutor or they may be provided by students. Normally, resources will be chosen for the contribution they can make to achieving established aims and objectives, though on occasions one of those 'chance occurrences' (a particular article someone has found, a remark sparked by a current issue that everyone has an opinion on, an unexpected visitor) can lead to profitable and appropriate activity.

7.1.4 Grouping

see point 6.2, page 22

Chapter Four
Some Groups in Operation

Barbara Goulborn – EXPERIMENTING WITH STRUCTURE: NEWS AND MUSIC

BACKGROUND

This group was formed after an interview day mid-1988. Amongst the many students interviewed by myself and the other Adult Literacy teacher, were 6 men who expressed (and demonstrated) that they could read and write very little without a lot of assistance. They each expressed a need to be able to read and to fill in forms. One person said he would like to write letters and to write down the poetry he thinks up. As established groups were working at a more advanced level we decided to set up a new literacy 2 hour weekly evening class to cater for the needs of this group of prospective students.

THE STUDENTS

Two of the students, Harry and Joe, are on Workcare, unable to retrain without literacy skills. They are desperately looking for more literacy classes. There is a real need for full-time literacy provision for potential students like these and next year we hope to start courses catering for industrially-injured students. Joe, of Maltese origin, transferred to a day time class later in the semester. Harry has had a volunteer literacy tutor for 3 years. He also attends another literacy class. Two younger men, Duane and Billy, are unemployed: they had known each other at school. Billy had 'forgotten' how to read and write after a hit-and-run car accident. He only attended the class a few times and follow up letters (he had no phone) suggesting he phone me brought no replies. Perhaps no-one at home was able to read the letters for him. Another pair of students, John and Patrick, had attended the same special school, apparently because of speech problems. Patrick works in a Sheltered Workshop. John is a boilerman, but cannot get promotion without increased literacy ability.

One newcomer to the class in Term 4 was Kenny who had previously attended my classes unwillingly (pressed by a concerned parent) and who learnt very little, due, I felt, to lack of any desire or apparent need to learn. He now has been suspended from his apprenticeship course at another TAFE College, pending his ability to show evidence of some literacy skills. Kenny continued to be a passive, if not reluctant student, unable to find even 10 minutes a week in which to read or write between classes. After several weeks of passive attendance at classes where he would often turn up late and without paper, pen or last week's reading text, I discussed with him the necessity of work at home, and the nature of learning being 2-way, not just a matter of passively sitting and 'soaking up' literacy, but a matter of telling yourself you really want to learn: putting time and effort into it. The following week he seemed more engaged in class activities and actually to be achieving something and I acknowledged his progress. Subsequently, however, his attendance has waned and he is the only student not to re-enrol for next year. I feel Kenny's case is an example of how self-motivation is essential in order for learning to take place.

Later in the semester, Sophie, an Egyptian woman in her late 30's, who had been in Australia for about 18 years, joined the class, as a referral from an ESL evening class at the college. Her level of literacy was apparently much lower than others in the ESL class, but her oracy level was high, so her teacher believed my beginners' literacy class would suit her better. I was worried about how she might fit into the all Aussie male environment of the class, but after meeting and talking with her, I decided that she would be able to cope with any cultural differences (more the differences between male and female culture than those of ethnic culture, I believe) and that her literacy needs would be met in the class. I explained to her that the class members were all males and that they were *Australians* who, for various reasons, had had trouble with learning to read and write when younger. I've found in the past that non-Australian born bi-lingual students who come to literacy classes because of English being a second (or third in some cases) language, are often shocked to find that they are amongst literacy students who are Australian.

The core of five students were regular attenders who were very keen to learn, but not totally confident that they would do so. During the first week, a student – initiated group conversation about their illiteracy (common causes and shared problems) took place. This 'opening up' and the fact that two pairs of students had known each other at school, greatly helped the 'gelling' of the group. Discussions about the reasons for them not learning to read and write at school, and the social and psychological implications of this, are now freely (and frequently!) talked about. I take these opportunities to help students understand more about learning: to try to instil confidence and to encourage them to see themselves as active learners rather than passive imbibers of education. It is important for this sort of discussion to take place: both for the individual and the group. It has to come from students but it is important to make the connections between personal anecdotes and principles or generalisations.

I see the explanation of my methodology as a inseparable part of the learning process, and I believe that because this group 'opened up' and, I sensed, felt comfortable with each other and with me from a very early date, they are not intimidated by asking for more detailed explanations and justification of my teaching methods: they are open with each other about their abilities/needs/problems.

THE LEARNING PROGRAM

I had not taught a beginner level literacy group for a few years. I decided to take a fresh approach to planning the learning program for this class – I wanted the 'routine' of the class to be fairly tightly structured to help the students through their lack of study skills: they had to know exactly what they were doing, why they were doing it, and be able to see some achievement immediately.

Most of them were desperate to learn and frustrated with the limitations illiteracy had imposed on their lives. All of the students expressed a need to 'just be able to read' and, whilst not totally excluding writing from the learning program I made ***reading*** the main priority for the first term. This differs from my previous approach to teaching a beginner group, where I have placed much more emphasis on teaching reading and writing together through a Language – Experience Approach. For the first 10 weeks the emphasis has been on MAKING SENSE OUT OF PRINT and enabling the students to see themselves as ***readers.*** [Reference: *Joining the Literacy Club* by Frank Smith. The essay in the book of the same title expands on the idea of the role of self-perception as a Literate Being as an essential part of the literacy-learning process. see Reading List]

READING

In order to decide how to teach and what to teach we of course need a theory of literacy. Underlying my literacy teaching is the theory of psycholinguistics. Reading is about making sense of the author's communication using the three cueing systems:

semantic: knowledge of the world/meaning, real world experience

syntactic: knowledge of grammar (because we speak the language), the structure of language

graphophonic: knowledge of letter(s)/sound relationships, the shape of letters and words.

For more reading on psycholinguistics and literacy I would suggest:

- *Understanding Reading* by Frank Smith, 1971 [see Reading List]
- *Psycholinguistics and Reading* by Frank Smith, 1973 [see Reading List]
- *A Language for Life* (the Bullock Report) 1975, Department of Education and Science, UK, published HMSO.

When interviewing the prospective students and evaluating their reading (ie. informally analysing their reading miscues) it was apparent that their use of cueing systems was weak. They did not expect the text to make sense (only to say words) and hence made wild guesses at unknown words. Their understanding of the reading process indicated belief in graphophonic cueing as the only method of reading, and they said that this was what they needed instruction in (*'I don't know my sounds, to break down words I don't know'* was a common statement).

The reading program in my group was designed to develop use of all 3 cueing strategies. I also encourage use of AURAL memory as an aid to cueing, through repeated listening to readings of texts (live and taped). Each class was designed around a particular TEXT. At first I mainly used newspaper articles on topics of general interest, usually ones that had had T.V. news coverage in order to maximise SEMANTIC prediction (knowing what it's about before reading it). I rewrite news articles to:

- make them shorter
- make the grammatical structure less complex and somewhat closer to spoken language (eg. eliminating subordinate clauses at the beginning of a sentence: 'Wearing only a nappy and singlet, he disappeared for two days' might become 'He disappeared for two days, wearing only a nappy and singlet').

I also shorten the lines of text in order to create more predictable (linguistically and for meaning) breaks. These are more like the pauses that occur in oral reading and help the student with the flow of the text. [see Reading List: Goodman and Burke on selecting materials for strategy lessons]. The result is that we work from a whole text, one which is self-contained and complete within itself.

My aim at this point of the literacy-learning process was to make the reading easier for the student who is unaccustomed to the structure and style of written language by facilitating semantic and syntactic prediction, not by making the text graphophonically 'regular' (Dan can fan the man)!

Here are the outlines of 2 class session plans used in my class at Broadmeadows TAFE, 2nd semester, 1988.

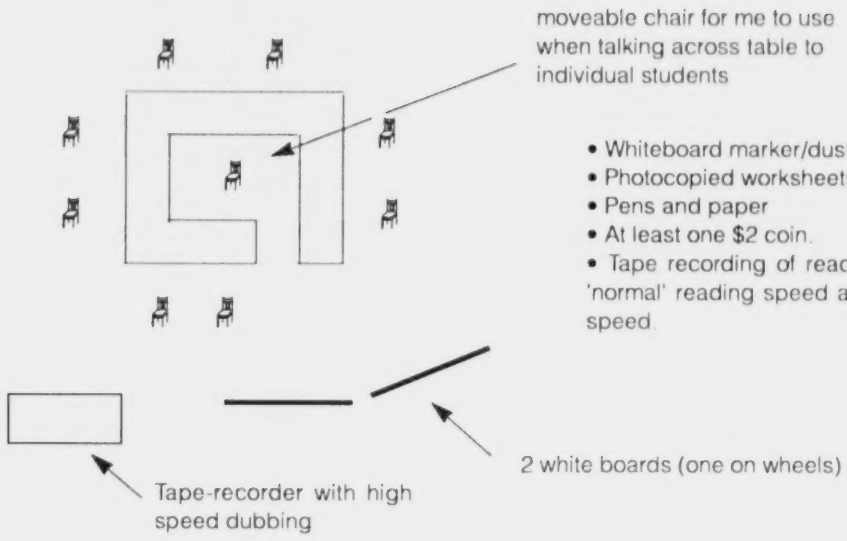
CLASS ONE

OUTLINE SESSION PLAN

INTRODUCTIONS/WELCOME	
ACTIVITY ONE	INTRODUCTION TO TEXT READ HEADLINE PREDICT CONTENT LISTEN/'READ ALONG' as group
ACTIVITY TWO	READ INDIVIDUALLY
ACTIVITY THREE	TRUE FALSE statements
ACTIVITY FOUR	SPELLING (dollars/cents)
ACTIVITY FIVE	CLOZE – words supplied.
ACTIVITY SIX	SPELLING (20/30/40/50 dollars/cents)
ACTIVITY SEVEN	MIXED-UP SENTENCES
ACTIVITY EIGHT	FIND THE WORD
ACTIVITY NINE	COMPLETE THE SENTENCE 'The $2 coin is...'

28

THE ROOM


moveable chair for me to use when talking across table to individual students
• Whiteboard marker/duster
• Photocopied worksheets
• Pens and paper
• At least one $2 coin.
• Tape recording of reading of text at 'normal' reading speed and at 'slower' speed.
2 white boards (one on wheels)
Tape-recorder with high speed dubbing

1. INTRODUCTION

I welcomed the students individually then when all were assembled, I introduced myself and had the students in turn tell their name to the rest of the group. I wrote down their names (on a sketch plan of the tables) as an aide-memoire to myself, and repeated their names aloud (for myself and the other students to remember the names). I usually avoid sticky name labels and 'games' to memorise names as I worry that they might find them childish or patronising.

I welcomed the students to the class, told them it's run by the Department of Language Studies, and gave them the college phone number and my departmental phone number. I told them how long the class would run, what the enrolment procedure would be (the following week), that they could take a short break whenever they liked, and that if they had any problems about the class or their progress, that they'd be welcome to contact me or leave a message for me to contact them. Also I told them I'd appreciate it if they could ring me if they were absent for more than a week.

Activity One: Introduction to text and Group reading

I told the students that we were doing a reading exercise: not to panic if it seemed difficult – it always does the first week, but gradually they'd find things easier. I explained how I was teaching them and why I was doing a particular exercise, because this would help them understand what was going on, and what was expected of them, and I said that they were welcome to ask me about anything they didn't understand.

I gave students the worksheet NEW COIN IS WELCOME CHANGE [see page 29] and told them I was reading the *headline:* pointing out the bold print and moving my finger along the words as I did so.

'So, looking at the headline and the picture, what do you think the article is going to be about?' (General agreement it's about the new $2 coin). *'Has everyone seen the new coin?'* [They had – so I didn't get out the $2 coin I'd brought in.]

'What do you think about it?' [A brief discussion followed.]

'So, we know this article is about the new $2 coin, and how people are not that happy with it.' [I continued to explain that I'd got them to PREDICT what the article was about because this made it easier to read.]

'People who read fast and fluently usually (although they might not realise it) skip through the "text" (the writing) for odd words in order to know what it's going to be about. If you know this text is about the $2 coin, and not about "How to Knit" or "Space Travel", then you can predict

words that will crop up. Fast readers don't read every single letter, or even every single word, but they make a lot of predictions and guesses – not wild guesses, but sensible guesses. If you can speak the language you're reading, and you have an idea of what the text is about, you can predict a lot of words'

eg. *'Consumers say the $2 coin is too . . .'* (students provided a word such as small, heavy, etc. I emphasized that – either of these words would MAKE SENSE, and to CONFIRM the prediction you'd look at the ***first letter,*** not actually sound out the whole word, which can SLOW DOWN YOUR READING) This basic message is re-emphasized every class, several times. It is a de-mystification of the reading process: it's not some magical quality you have or have not got – it's a combination of learnable skills.

$1 coin

$2 coin

New coin is unwelcome change, say consumers

The $2 coin has been legal tender for a few weeks.

But people are not getting used to it.

Shopkeepers, the blind and consumers say it is too small.

They say it is too much like a 5-cent coin, a 2-cent coin or a $1 coin.

Shopkeepers are worried about giving people the wrong change.

Consumers are worried about getting the wrong change.

Usually, when a new coin comes out, people are keen to get hold of it.

This time, it's different.

People are asking banks for the old $2 notes.

The $2 coin and the $2 note cost about the same to produce. But the coin last 80 times as long as the note.

30

Then I had the students listen to me reading the text at normal speed. Next I read the text ***slowly*** and had the students try to follow the words as I read them, occasionally stopping to check that students are keeping up: eg. 'The next line begins with the word "consumer" – has everyone got that? – it begins with "C" ' – and I quickly check everyone's there.

I repeated the text slowly several times, encouraging the students to follow it, reading it silently or aloud as a group, with me. I asked if people would like to follow it **again**. I told them I had put the text on tape – first at normal speed then a couple of times at slower speed, and that they could listen to the tape more if they liked. I also suggested each person bring in a blank cassette tape so that they could make a copy of the recorded text each week to listen to at home: so that they could memorise the recording and be able to follow the text more easily.

At this point, we had a discussion about whether this helps you to actually ***read,*** or if it is just learning-by-heart? We talked a bit about memory, and about signs people could read (Coca Cola, MacDonalds), how familiarity (memory) of a word in its context (on the bottle) means you can read it in another context (in an ad.). We talked about how if you ***see*** the word as you're ***hearing*** or ***saying*** the same word, then you're learning to read it – you're associating a written word with the spoken word it stands for . . etc.

An unplanned activity

Here ensued a discussion initiated by one of the students about whether all the other guys in the class were as unable to read and write as he was. I chose to allow this discussion to develop: they talked about what they felt were the reasons for their illiteracy, about standards in schools today, about whether computers would take over from handwriting, about the social and economic handicaps of being illiterate and many more commonly-held experiences and beliefs. I felt this discussion opened people up, made them realise illiteracy was a common problem and led them to question the belief that they as individuals were at fault. In retrospect, I feel this discussion really was significant in bonding the group and inducing a relaxed, feeling of trust in the group. It led to further discussions, and also a sense of kinship with other people with literacy problems (eg. keenness to tell each other about a T.V. feature film about an illiterate man).

Activity 2: Reading silently/individually

Then I re-read the text slowly with students following, and had them subsequently read the text silently to themselves. I went around the class (inside the square of tables) talking to each individual student about how they were managing. They marked and discussed any words they found troublesome. I read through the text with the student following me (individually) where necessary, gradually joining in with me.

Activity 3: True/False statements [see page 31]

During this activity I asked students to look at each sentence in turn and read it to themselves, then asked for volunteers to read the sentence to the class. I pointed out the words 'TRUE/FALSE' then read the sentence again; and students decided if it was true or false, marking the word TRUE or FALSE. I encouraged referring to original text where necessary.

Students read sentences (true or false) related to the original text. This involved reading the same words as in the text, although sometimes differently arranged. Deciding whether it is a true or false statement sometimes, although not always, involves referring back to the text and finding the related statement, re-reading, and checking against the new statement. Reading the same words over again reinforces word recognition, but the words are still within a meaningful, though ***slightly*** different context.

Activity 3 – True/False Statements

THE $2 COIN

1. The $2 coin has been legal tender for a few weeks.	True/False
2. People say it is too big.	True/False
3. Blind people are not getting used to it.	True/False
4. The coin lasts 20 times as long as the note.	True/False
5. People are keen to get hold of the new $2 coins.	True/False
6. Shopkeepers are worried about giving people the wrong change.	True/False
7. The $2 coin is too much like the 50-cent piece.	True/False
8. The $2 coin and the $2 note cost about the same to produce.	True/False

Activity 4: Spelling – learning to write 'dollar' and 'cents'

I suggested that as we were on the subject of money it might be appropriate to learn to write the words 'dollars' and 'cents' which you need when writing cheques or withdrawal forms. I told them to fill in the missing letters, and that it wasn't cheating to refer back to the whole word; in fact, this was a way of learning it, because each time you look at the whole word and study the position of the letters in it, you're getting to know/learn how to spell the word.

I suggested finally trying to write the word on the other side of the paper, without looking at the original, then checking for correctness, and continuing with this for homework. I stressed the value of repeated practice in learning of this kind.

Activity 4 – Spelling Memorisation

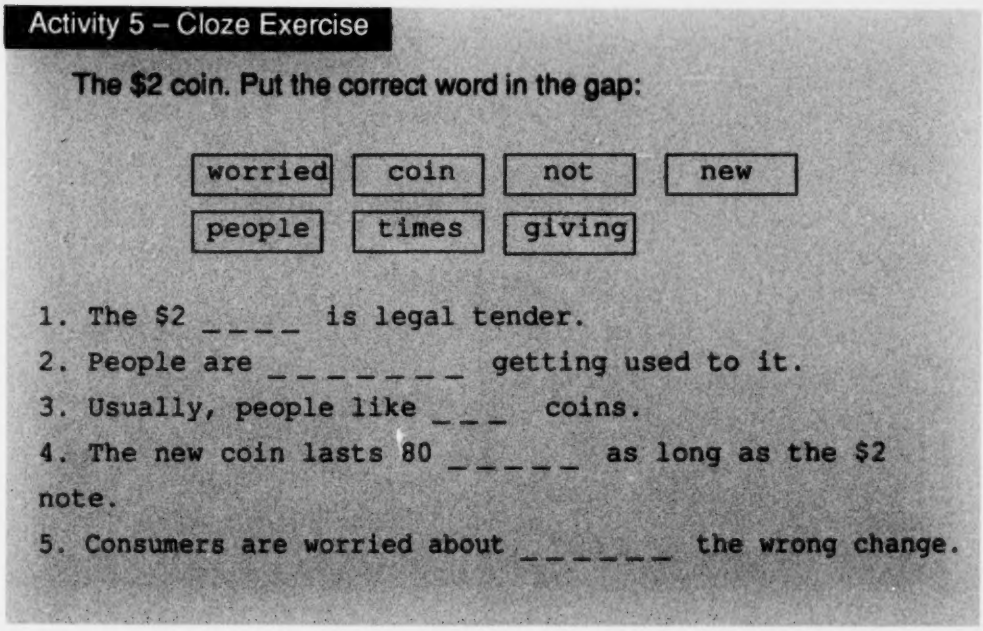
$	¢
dollars	cents
_ollars	_ents
d_llars	c_nts
do_lars	ce_ts
dol_ars	cen_s
doll_rs	cent_
dollar_	_____
_____	

Activity 5: Cloze exercise [see page 32]

I explained that this exercise involved filling in the missing words. The reason for doing this exercise was to develop the skill of prediction – which is an essential part of reading: the intelligent/sensible guesswork already discussed previously. This was another example of de-mystifying the reading process: identifying and naming parts of the process in order to give students a greater measure of control over them. I did the first example:

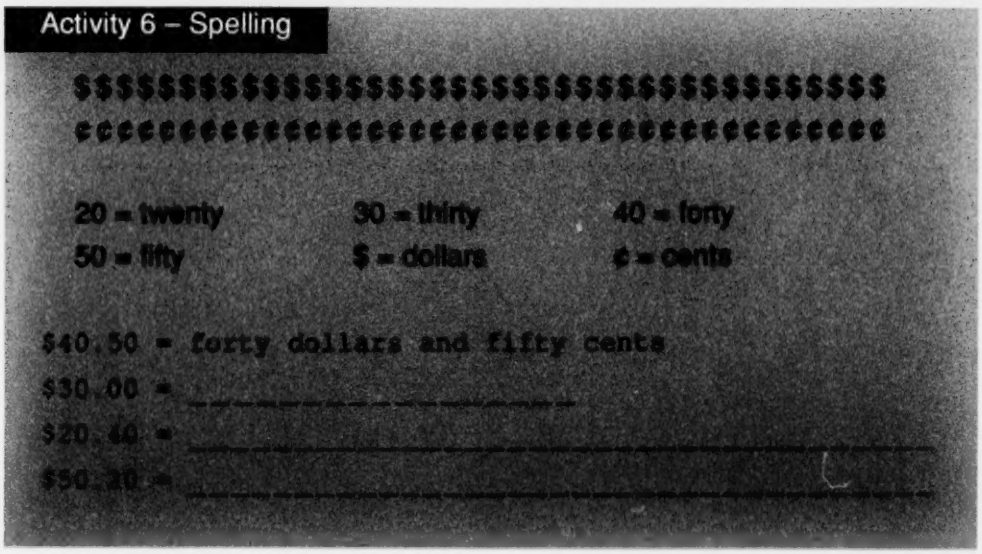
'The $2 "something" is legal tender' What do you think the word is?

I explained that I'd given the missing words in boxes, and read them as they followed. I continued to read through the sentences with the students following, reading 'something' or 'blah' for the missing word. Students orally filled the gap as a group, then went back to individually re-read and write in the missing word. I went around to each student checking they understood and that they could read the sentences/individual word.


Activity 5 – Cloze Exercise
The $2 coin. Put the correct word in the gap:
worried
coin
not
new
people
times
giving
1. The $2 _____ is legal tender.
2. People are _____ getting used to it.
3. Usually, people like ____ coins.
4. The new coin lasts 80 _____ as long as the $2 note.
5. Consumers are worried about _____ the wrong change.

Activity 6: spelling

The students had to write the given amount in words instead of figures.



Activity 7: Mixed up sentences [see page 33]

The students had to read the beginning part of a text-related sentence, then read through the given possible endings in order to complete a sentence that made sense. This was done as a group activity, with me guiding students about how to approach the activity and having them read with me. This exercise involved repeated reading of (by now) familiar words, and an encouragement of READING for MEANING: making print MAKE SENSE rather than only MAKE SOUNDS.

Activity 7 – Mixed-up sentences

A	B
Usually people like	for the old notes.
The $2 coin	new coins
People are asking	is legal tender.
The $2 coin and note	the coin is too small.
Blind people say	cost the same to produce.

Activity 8: Find the word

This was hopefully to encourage a visual recognition of frequent clusters of letters , a familiarity with common spelling patterns and a reinforcement of recognising words already encountered. I have no proof that this actually works (transfers to spelling ability, although I would think so) and find the activity very difficult to do myself, but I felt it was worthwhile as a bit of a light relief involving print. Students recognised the words faster than I did which I think increased their confidence. A few students say they do these puzzles in magazines and ***love*** the activity. Perhaps I should get the students to make up these puzzles.This doesn't necessarily mean it is a ***useful*** activity: benefits to individual students need to be watched closely. One fellow told me that he couldn't read the words but he could recognise and match them and check the answer in the back of the magazine. Discussion with students about how they go about an activity like this will help assess its real value for long term learning. It will also let everyone in on the strategies others use when confronted with a task like this.

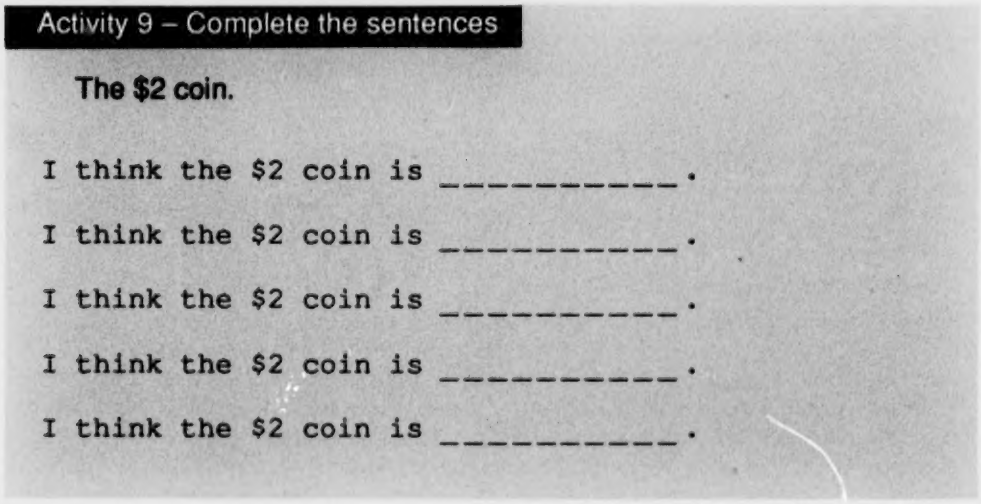
Activity 8 – Find the words in this list

c	o	i	n	b	b	a	n	k	i
a	i	c	o	p	s	m	a	l	l
s	h	d	k	e	e	n	g	p	e
w	u	o	l	o	n	g	f	r	f
o	w	l	m	p	t	z	c	o	r
r	d	l	e	l	i	k	e	d	s
r	j	a	l	e	m	n	n	u	h
i	v	r	k	c	e	o	t	c	u
e	t	s	f	q	s	p	s	e	t
d	i	f	r	e	r	e	n	t	g

coin
worried
people
like
keen
small
different
times
produce
bank
cents
dollars
long

Activity 9: Complete the sentences

I read the incomplete sentence to the students and had them (orally) provide a few words or phrases to complete the sentence. These could be from the text or composed by the student. Then I got them to write the completed sentence, either copying words in the text or having a go at writing the word from memory or asking me to write any unknown words which they would then copy. They read back the completed sentences to me individually.


Activity 9 – Complete the sentences
The $2 coin.
I think the $2 coin is _____.
I think the $2 coin is _____.
I think the $2 coin is _____.
I think the $2 coin is _____.
I think the $2 coin is _____.

I concluded the class by outlining what they could do for homework, reminding them that 2 hours per week is not enough time in which to make significant progress, and suggesting they allocate a certain amount of time each day (even 10 minutes) for studying.

Suggested activities were:

- read text over and over
- check/learn you can still spell the words dollars and cents

CLASS 2 – *some weeks after Class 1*

Previous week's class spent attending Michael Marquet's talk on his speech/literacy problems and how he overcame them. [see Reading List]

Activity 1:

Informal discussion about Michael Marquet's talk and what people had learnt from it: goal-setting, time-scale of learning, determination, turning negative to positive etc.

Activity 2: Complete the sentences and look cover write check

Complete the sentences using words learnt in earlier classes. [see page 35] I told students they could refresh their memory if they wished by referring to the text we had worked from in a previous class, otherwise they were to write the word from memory, then check. Newish student copies as he hasn't learnt the words. I read sentences to students as a group then individually as required. [One student said he'd set up an Adult Literacy college if he won Tattslotto!.]

Complete the sentences

1. Bob Hawke is the Prime Minister of A_____.
2. Broadmeadows is a suburb of M_____.
3. The State we live in is V_____.
4. The price of b_____ is now lower.
5. There were no t__ cuts in the Budget.
6. I live in the suburb of _____.
7. My name is _____.
8. If I won Tattslotto I would _____
_____
_____

Look/Cover/Write/Check

Australia	
was	
Melbourne	
Victoria	
September	
tax	
beer	
dollars	
cents	

Activity 3: 'Heart like a wheel' [see page 36]

I played a tape of the song, sung by Linda Ronstadt, and students followed the written words. I explained this was like following the newspaper texts and was to develop the skills they needed for reading (as well as being pleasant to listen to): if they ***saw*** a word at the same time as ***hearing*** it, a connection is being made in their memory.

I also explained that if it was hard to follow first time(which it was for 2 students) then they shouldn't worry: I had to play it heaps of times in order to get the words down. I also told them I had a record of Mexican songs in Spanish by Linda Ronstadt. The words were printed on the record sleeve and I had been following them (reading and singing) which I reckoned had improved my reading of Spanish, and my familiarity with the flow of the language (grammar) which I had once

learnt (or rather been taught but had not learnt) at school for 2 years. I thought the same would apply to their reading (of English) through following the song. This seemed to be a popular activity.

Activity 3 – *Heart like a wheel*

Chorus

Some say the heart
Is just like a wheel
When you bend it
You can't mend it.
But my love for you
Is like a sinking ship
And my heart is on that ship
Out in mid-ocean.

When harm is done
No love can be won
I know it happens frequently.
But I can't understand,
Oh, please God, hold my hand,
Why it had to happen to me.
And it's only love, and it's only love
That can wreck a human being
And turn him inside out.

One student in particular seemed to 'light up' and joined in the singing. He told me that he composed songs and had got his little sister to transcribe them. He then showed me a 'love poem' he'd composed, which I read and said I thought was great. I didn't want to embarrass him by reading it out and making a fuss. Later on I discussed publishing one of his poems in the student writing magazine. He agreed. He also showed me some ideas – odd words grouped together – for new poems and songs. I said I could help him write down the words if he liked – and to be sure to bring in the ideas next week. (Here I was trying to balance a real enthusiasm for his work with not wanting to give him too much individual treatment at a point when we were working as a group). I talked about another student of mine who writes songs and who gave us a performance last year. We agreed the song-reading was successful – one student said he thought music was really important for learning and I talked about the Suggestopaedia Method of language learning where students listen to music which matches the human heart beat thus making the listener more receptive to learning. We played Linda Ronstadt several more times and we talked about other likely songs for transcribing/reading. (Agreed that words of Heavy Metal music not clear enough!).

The Lesson continued with prediction, group reading, cloze exercises and other activities deriving from a whole text similar to those in Class One.

How the class continued until the end of the semester

READING

I continued to use summarized newspaper articles as the texts to focus on each week. I started copying the whole original article and reading it for the students, to listen to and look at, but not to follow, before giving them the summarized version. The idea of this was to familiarize them with the style of newspaper writing and to make more use of pictures, captions and headlines in predicting

content of text. I also persuaded them to buy the newspaper frequently, especially during the summer recess, to look at articles, predict what they're about and to try to read articles which might interest them.

The song reading continued to be popular and useful. *'Little Boxes'* (Malvina Reynold's song), however, was a bad choice: the irony was misunderstood – 'If that's 60's music, you can keep it' said one younger member of the class. The curriculum was negotiated and by popular request an Elvis song was on the taperecorder the following week! Roy Orbison's *'Blue Bayou'* was an all-time hit, despite US vocabulary posing a few problems for Sophie, who read 'saving nickels, saving dimes' as 'saving necklaces, saving diamonds' demonstrating use of semantic and syntactic cueing ***and*** grapho-phonic cueing, as far as her experience permitted.

I have always believed that I learnt to read through singing and following the written words of hymns from an early age (many of them in Latin) and have watched my own children do the same with ABC song books and tapes. *'Breakthrough to Literacy'* reading scheme (UK 1970's) also included nursery rhymes to encourage 'read-along' literacy learning. Next semester, I'd like to vary the type of texts used in the class, although newspaper articles and songs will continue to feature regularly!

WRITING

More writing was introduced using the *'Language Experience Approach'* [see Reading List]. Sometimes, I would suggest students write comments related to a discussion on the topic of the text read in class. For example, after reading a news article on two small boys being killed by a train, we discussed and wrote about whose responsibility was the care of children playing near rail lines. At other times, students tended to write about something they were personally interested in, or a recent event (going to the beach, illegal drag racing, etc). The students would dictate their sentences for me to 'scribe'. I would make 2 copies, on card, and have an envelope in which they would take away the words. One sentence was cut up into individual words. I would read back the written sentence to the student who would read it with me, then on his/her own, several times, until I was sure s/he could read it. The student would then order the cut-up words, matching them with the whole sentence. The next step was to order the words ***without*** matching, just checking with the original afterwards.

The student would copy the sentence several times, to become familiar with how the words were written, and learn how to write the sentence (eventually without copying) for homework. I suggested the look/cover/write/check method as a memorization technique. This would be tested in the following week's class, both individually (self-testing) and in pairs.

Duane would often arrive at college early for the class, and choose to sit in his 4-wheel drive customized ute and copy out his sentence repeatedly whilst listening to Heavy Metal on the stereo. He would usually be able to write his learnt sentence very accurately and was pleased with his achievement. Often students would dictate their sentences to each other in pairs, which worked very well. They exchanged sentences, teaching each other how to read them before dictating them. The more adventurous would have a go at writing down the partner's sentence as well as their own.

I worried about the difference in age/sex/culture between Sophie and other class members as it might affect activities in pairs. But my fears were unfounded as she and the tattooed, love-poem writing 'bogun' with the customized ute seemed to be relaxed and joking as they dictated their sentences to one another!

During the last class, close to Christmas, students learnt to write Christmas greetings and how to address envelopes. Form-filling remained a constantly practised activity and Harry was extremely pleased to have filled in a form unaided by his family.

EVALUATION

Question: 'What do you regard as the greatest danger in education today?' Answer: 'In one word evaluation'. (Frank Smith, pps 132-137 – *Joining the Literacy Club*).

If we are not careful, educational administrators will require so much evaluation that teachers will end up 'evaluating' more than teaching. For me, ongoing evaluation is an integral, inseparable part

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of teaching: what's the point of teaching unless people are learning? and if they are not learning, why are they not and what is to be done? All teachers are, hopefully, asking themselves these questions all the time, as they teach. Whilst teaching this class, as in others, I encouraged student comment and 'evaluation' of progress and process as well as constantly evaluating the same myself.

Sometimes a student's perceived progress would be less than what I considered to be actual progress of a particular student. Duane, however, felt that he had learnt *'more in one term than the whole time I was in school'*. Motivation, input, active learning were always discussed when individual progress was the topic: getting out as much as you put in.

All five students who continued to the end of the semester felt they had increased their literacy ability. They want to do a lot more writing next year. Each of them has re-enrolled, and 4 out of 5 would like a one to one volunteer tutor in addition to attending a class. These 4 (not Sophie) would also like numeracy tuition or classes. John, who started off with a tutor and then came to the classes too, felt this helped him a lot: he could raise his class work each week with his tutor. His tutor also liked the arrangement as it made her task easier to revise and develop the kind of work John had been doing with me. I hope to arrange literacy/numeracy tutors from the Broadmeadows TAFE tutor program for these students next year. All students wanted more classes. So far I have been able to extend the class by half an hour next year, and hopefully will establish full-time literacy classes for those on Workcare.

The content of the texts we worked from seemed acceptable/enjoyable by all: increased purchase of newspapers and evidence of perusal of record sleeves with song words on seems to show this, but it was important of course to get news items and songs that interested all the students. Harry felt that although he found the taperecordings of texts especially helpful, the texts I used were too long and that I should use something similar in length to his childrens' books. What I suggested was that after listening to and following the whole text used, he should concentrate on a part of it at a time, until he felt confident enough to progress to the next part.

On reflection, I enjoyed teaching this class very much. My methodology was a lot more formal and structured than it had been in the past (or in concurrent classes) but I felt comfortable with this new-found structure: perhaps because the students were happy with it too, and, more importantly, they were observably learning. I believe the students developed a notion of how I was teaching: ideas on the nature of the reading process. Also, they knew what was expected of them as active learners. If, for any reason they had missed a class, they were able to collect a copy of the text, and to some extent 'catch up' on their own.

Helena Spyrou – WOMEN'S GROUP IN A NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

THE PROGRAM

The Reading and Writing Program in Flemington has been recently established and is based at the local neighbourhood house. Three classes are running at present; two during the day and one in the evening. Each group meets for two hours once a week.

Potential students are referred to me through agencies in the community. I then arrange for each person to attend an interview with me which takes about an hour. Appropriate placement of potential students is ideally based on a variety of selection criteria, stemming from the interview process, and requires the availablility of a range of groups running at different times and venues, and for different purposes and needs. As this is a new program, the selection process for the formation of each group could only be based on the time availability of the people interviewed.

THE GROUP

I have chosen my Thursday morning class to outline small group methodology in a community setting. Two dynamics of the class are that they are all women and of mixed ability.

Other dynamics in the group will evolve as students begin to clarify how they see the group and their role in it. I assist in the development of group cohesion by offering a comfortable environment and a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere. I use activities in such a way as to encourage participation and a sharing of ideas where students may discover a common purpose and help each other to identify and achieve short and long-term goals. I also work towards a sharing of a variety of roles.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF OPERATING THE GROUP

1. To help students know what they want to learn and decide why and how they want to learn it, I provide a skills checklist at regular intervals and a worksheet on setting short and long-term goals. [see page 40]

2. I share my objectives with students by letting them know what each activity is about and how it helps in the acquisition of literacy skills.

3. I keep a diary where I note comments made by students, through their formal weekly evaluation of the lesson and through their informal comments during the lesson. I make notes in each lesson which help me plan the following one.

4. I encourage students to keep a folder using dividers to organise the work they cover in class. I also keep a folder where I store the work we've covered in class and copies of each student's writing.

5. I encourage an interchange of a variety of roles both for the students and myself within the group. This helps the group to take responsibility in a variety of situations. For example:

- in preparing work for the group and individuals – initially I do, and later students can undertake the task
- in suggesting topics for future work – both students and myself
- in deciding on acceptable behaviour in the group eg. – smoking, attendance – this can be negotiated with the group
- in encouraging shy students to contribute and telling noisy ones to shut-up – initially I do and then I encourage students to also take responsibility
- in illustrating good practise in reading, writing and spelling – initially I do and then I encourage students to help each other by sharing what they learn and how they learn

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- in keeping records of individual and group evaluation – both students and myself do this
- in taking the session – initially I do and later students can also.

SKILLS CHECK LIST		
Spelling	– using various methods	
Punctuation	– eg. full stops, commas	
Grammar	– eg. sentences, plurals, tenses	
Reading	– eg. newspapers, letters, ads	
Reading & understanding	– a newspaper article	
	– notices	
	– forms: Medicare, tax	
	– a business letter	
	– a job advertisement	
	– following written instructions	
	– a story	
	– a book about facts or opinions	
Writing	– notes and messages	
	– a personal letter	
	– a business letter	
	– filling in a form	
	– stories or about your experiences	
References	– using a dictionary	
	– using a library	
	– using a street directory, phone book	
Communication skills	– listening	
	– expressing an opinion	
	– talking with confidence	
	– giving and following instructions	
Job Skills	– knowing where to look for a job	
	–ringing up about a job	
	– writing a 'resume'	
	– writing a job application	
	– going for an interview	
Life skills	– asking for information	
	– knowing how to find the service you want	
	– writing a letter of complaint	

READING AND WRITING PROCESSES AND METHODS

The theory of Frank Smith has been the basis in my teaching of reading and writing skills.

READING (Taken from *Reading*, Frank Smith, 1978)

Reading is about understanding the message of the author. It is about making sense of what one reads. To read with understanding the reader uses two sources of information:

Visual information	**non-visual information**
the print – letters	– reader's own background, knowledge and experience
– words	– reader's familiarity with the subject matter
– diagrams	– reader's familiarity with the structure and grammar of the language used in the text
– pictures	

A non-reader relying purely on visual information is not going to get very far. Our short term memory can hold an absolute maximum of 9 items at any one time and if we were to process letter by letter long words would be $f^1/o^2/r^3/g^4/o^5/t^6/t^7/e^8/n^9$ before they were finished (Kolers, 1970).

A fluent reader does not take in all the visual information of a text, rather s/he uses non-visual information to make predictions and informed guesses when certain words are not recognised by reading ahead. A fluent reader also skims and scans the print of a text using only the words relevant to her/his needs as when reading a telephone directory or instruction manual.

It is important then to encourage a non-reader to read for meaning by emphasising the use of non-visual information. This will improve the quality of the reader's predictions and develop fluency in reading.

To aid this process it is important to:

- provide a purpose for reading and relevant material of high interest to the reader
- enlist background information relevant to the text to be read
- enlist from students what they already know about the subject matter of the text to be read
- check that students understand the meaning of the vocabulary used in the text
- give students strategies to help them in making predictions and informed guesses by incorporating the following methods when doing activities.

MY METHODS

I always explain to students why I use a particular method and how I want students to use the method. Here are some of the methods I use regularly:

1. Prediction

This activity helps readers to make informed guesses when reading. It helps them to think about what they are reading and encourages them to read for meaning. This is a group exercise and it offers an opportunity to discuss the reading process with students.

2. Cloze

This activity works on the human need to complete unfinished visual and aural information. It helps readers to read for meaning and to make informed guesses using their knowledge of grammar and sentence structure and subject matter that stems from their oral skills. Cloze can be used in a variety of ways.

3. Underlining

This activity helps readers learn to skim and scan for information by underlining the relevant bits. It's good to use with a TV Guide, a telephone book, etc.

4. Tracking

A text to be read can be placed on tape. By listening to the tape and following the text the reader can develop fluent reading for meaning, using the flow of the text rather than becoming slowed down to the word and letter level.

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WRITING (Taken from *Writing and the Writer*, Frank Smith, 1982)

A writer needs a purpose and an audience. A writer needs:

- to have something to say
- to feel that writing it down is the best way of saying it
- to have someone in mind who wants to read it (including her/himself).

I use a variety of reading material that engenders discussion, and a sharing of ideas. I encourage the students to brainstorm and jot down the ideas that they have. I validate rough drafts. Sometimes I scribe or give students key words, phrases, or sentences to get them started. I emphasise content and meaning – 'composition' – and ask students not to worry too much about their spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc – 'transcription' – because we can correct that later.

When a first rough draft is sketched out I ask students to work towards a final draft by checking:

- for meaning – does it make sense?
  – is there anything you want to add or leave out?
- for grammar and punctuation
- for spelling.

BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS IN THE GROUP

Barbara is a 27 year old, basic education student who lacks confidence and self-esteem. She enjoys reading and creative writing and would like to develop various writing styles, in particular formal letter writing. She wants to improve her spelling, develop her thinking and understand factual information. She is the mother of two and home-based.

Jane is a 35 year old beginner reader/writer who has excellent functional skills when something can be dealt with orally and is very confident and self-assured. She enjoys language-experience and wants to work on social sight words, forms, and letter writing. She learns best through listening to reading material on tape and tracking, and by copying and underlining unfamiliar words. She is presently on sickness benefit and is a mother of three.

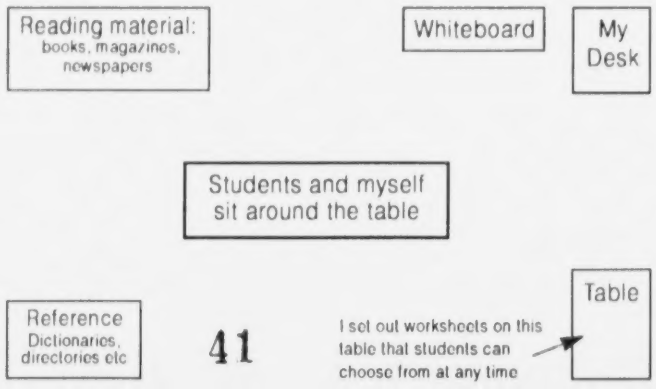
Louise is a 45 year old beginner writer with a reasonably good oral reading ability, but minimal comprehension. She wants to improve her spelling and develop functional reading and writing skills. She needs models of various writing styles to work with. She lacks confidence and has short-term memory. She has had severe shock therapy and is presently under tranquilisers. She has an adult son.

Connie is a 51 year old bilingual Italian who has worked in a factory for the past 20 years. She is literate in her own language and reads well. She would like to develop oracy and written skills and improve her grammatical structures.

Fran is a 57 year old bilingual Italian, the sister of Connie, who is a non-reader/writer. She wants to learn to read and express herself better.

Carol is a 36 year old beginner reader writer who has recently transferred from a one to one situation and needs to adjust to a group context. Her personal, emotional situations affect her concentration. She likes the language-experience approach and needs to develop functional literacy skills.

PHYSICAL SET UP OF THE ROOM


Reading material: books, magazines, newspapers
Whiteboard
My Desk
Students and myself sit around the table
Reference Dictionaries, directories etc
Table
I set out worksheets on this table that students can choose from at any time

OVERALL PLANNING FOR OUR SESSIONS

At the beginning of each class session I hand out a copy of a written plan to each student and I read it out. The plan outlines the activities for the lesson. This offers a loose framework and structure for the group and I can still maintain flexibility by being prepared to abandon set activities or carry them over into the following week if something more important arises. The format, which provides continuity for the group, is as follows:

- **Spelling Practice –**

this is a regular activity that happens at the beginning of each lesson. This helps students to develop a routine in practising their spelling. I have introduced the 'Look-Cover-Write-Check' method and have explained that it's a good introductory strategy because it's a multi-sensory approach to learning and spelling. If this method doesn't work, then I explain that there are other methods that we can look at and I introduce them when appropriate.

Photographing

Look at the word and try to photograph it with your eyes.
Close your eyes and try to see the word
Write the word, check and repeat twice more.
Make up a couple of sentences using the word.

Mis-pronouncing

Say the word as it is spelt.
eg. WED - NES - DAY / FEB - RU - ARY / PE - O - PLE.
Write the word, check and repeat twice more.
Make up a couple of sentences using the word.

Breaking up a word

Break up the word into syllables eg. AT TEN TION
Write the word, saying each syllable to yourself.
Check and repeat twice more, then use the word in a sentence.
NB. It's important that student, not teacher, decides how to split the word.

Focusing on the difficult part

This is very useful if you find that you're consistently getting one part of a word wrong.
Underline the difficult part. Write it in an exaggerated way eg. speCial.
Use a different coloured pen to write the difficult bit.

Mnemonics, rhymes and jingles

Rhymes or 'tricks' can help you remember a difficult word.
eg. you hear with your ears, 'necessary' - has 1 collar and 2 socks.
Mnemonics have to 'click' with you for them to be of any use.

Students choose 4-5 words from their own writing that they ***want*** to learn to spell. I explain that it's important to practise spelling using an appropriate method and to practise each word often – ideally 5 minutes daily

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• **Individual/Pair Work –**
students indicate what further work they require in their evaluation of the previous week's lesson and I prepare relevant activities to meet individual needs. Where two students have a similar need, I encourage pair work because it assists in mutual support and a sharing of skills

• **Group Work –**
a particular theme is chosen by either the students or myself and I prepare an activity which involves reading, discussion and writing

. **Evaluation –**
students evaluate each lesson [see Plan for Lesson One, below.]

LESSON ONE (taken from the middle of a series of lessons)

I handed out a copy of the following plan to each student and then I read it out.

PLAN FOR LESSON ONE

• **Spelling Practice -**

• **Individual/Pair Work –** last week each of you wrote in your evaluation what further work you wanted.
Fran & Connie: want more grammar work
Louise & Carol: want practice in writing numbers in words
Barbara: wants more work on sentences
Jane: wants to practice her address and spelling

• I have prepared worksheets for each of you.

BREAK

• **Group Work –** Reading: we will be continuing the story *'Crash in the Jungle'*. Today we will read Chapters 5 and 6.

• **Evaluation**
What did you do in this session? Was it useful?
What went well?
What further work do you need?
What would you like to do next week?

NOTES ON LESSON ONE

Spelling Practice: Students practised their individual spelling words using a method chosen from those presented. [see previous page] (NB. – Jane joined the group the previous week and was introduced to spelling using the 'look-cover-write-check' method in this session).

Individual/Pair Work: I sat with each student and in turn explained why I'd prepared her specific work sheet and how she was to complete it.

Jane's Activities:

• With each new student I use their own writing to develop relevant exercises.

Activity 1

Will help Jane to learn to recognise and self-correct her spelling errors from a passage written last week. It also gives her an opportunity to choose the words that she wants to learn to spell. [see page 45]

She chose 5 words from her writing and wrote them on the spelling sheet, underlining the difficult part because it helps her to focus on that part of the word. I explained to her the 'look-cover-write-check' method. I asked her to look at each word for as long as she wanted and when she's ready, to cover the word, write it in the next column, check it with the correct copy, repeat this process once more now, then at the end of the class and again each day at home spending no more than 5 minutes each time. I explained to her the multi-sensory nature of this method in learning to spell and that there are other methods as well that we can look at to assist or replace this method. [see page 45]

1. Correct your work by comparing it with the passage in the box.

live Street North Melbourne
My name is Jane and I leve at 10 Brown St N. Melb
job moment
I do not have a jope at the mone
read write letter
I want to red a book and rite a letor to my mum
be able read write
I hope to de adle to red and right and spell
ing fruit
I am good at cook, frue cake

Melbourne
name
read
write
live

My name is Jane and I live at 10 Brown Street, North Melbourne.
I do not have a job at the moment.
I want to read a book and write a letter to my mum.
I hope to be able to read and write and spell.
I am good at cooking fruit cake.

LOOK - COVER - WRITE - CHECK SHEET

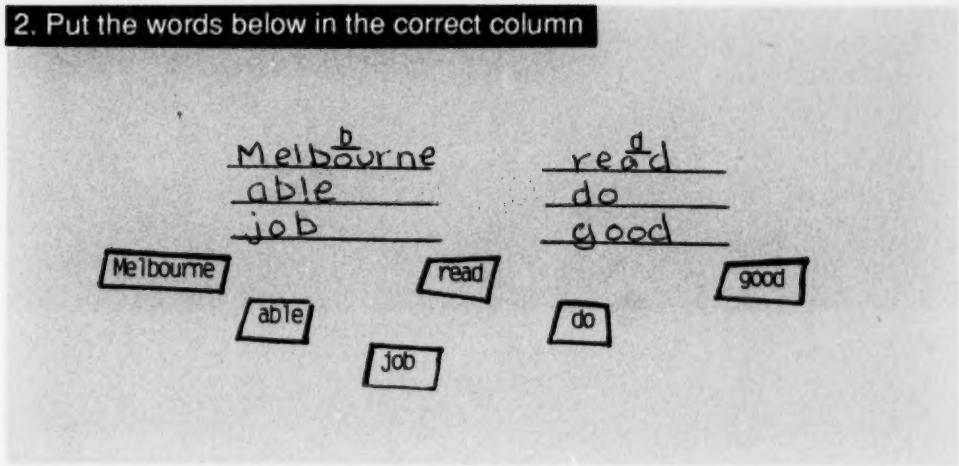
Date	Word	1st Try	2nd Try	end of class

Next class	2nd week	3rd week	4th week	5th week	6th week

LOOK at the word, COVER it up, WRITE it, CHECK it. Remember to practise the word often and use it in your writing.

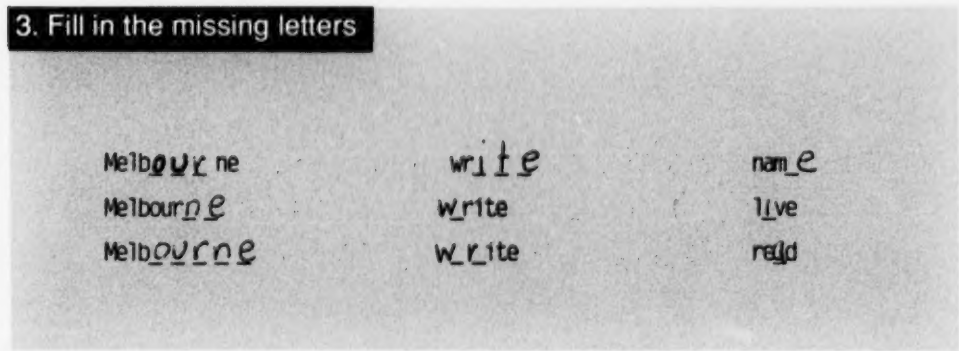
Activity 2

Will help Jane differentiate between b and d.



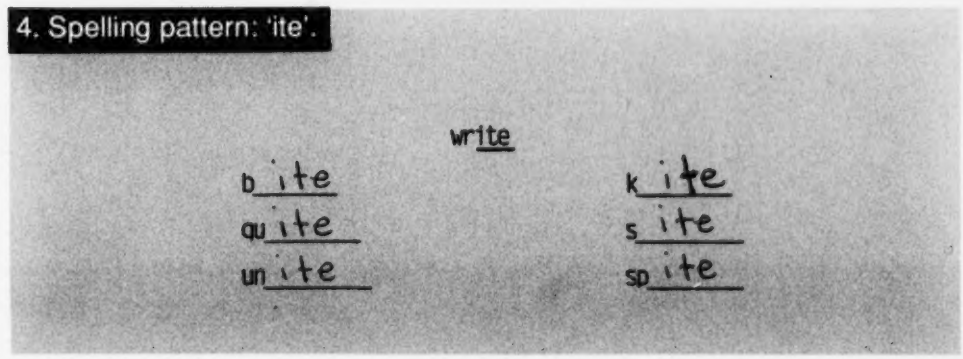
Activity 3

Focusing on the part of each word that Jane has difficulty in spelling.



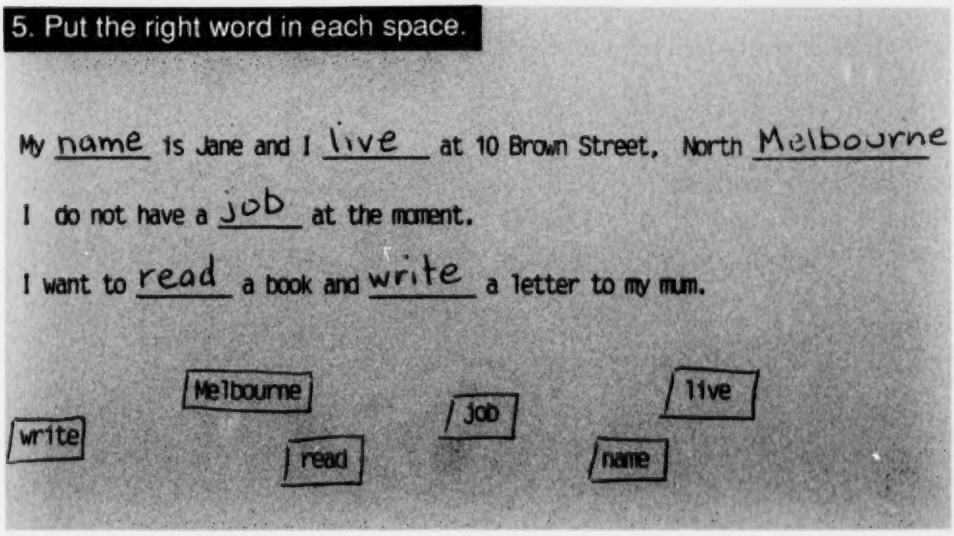
Activity 4

Familiarises Jane with 'ite' pattern in words.



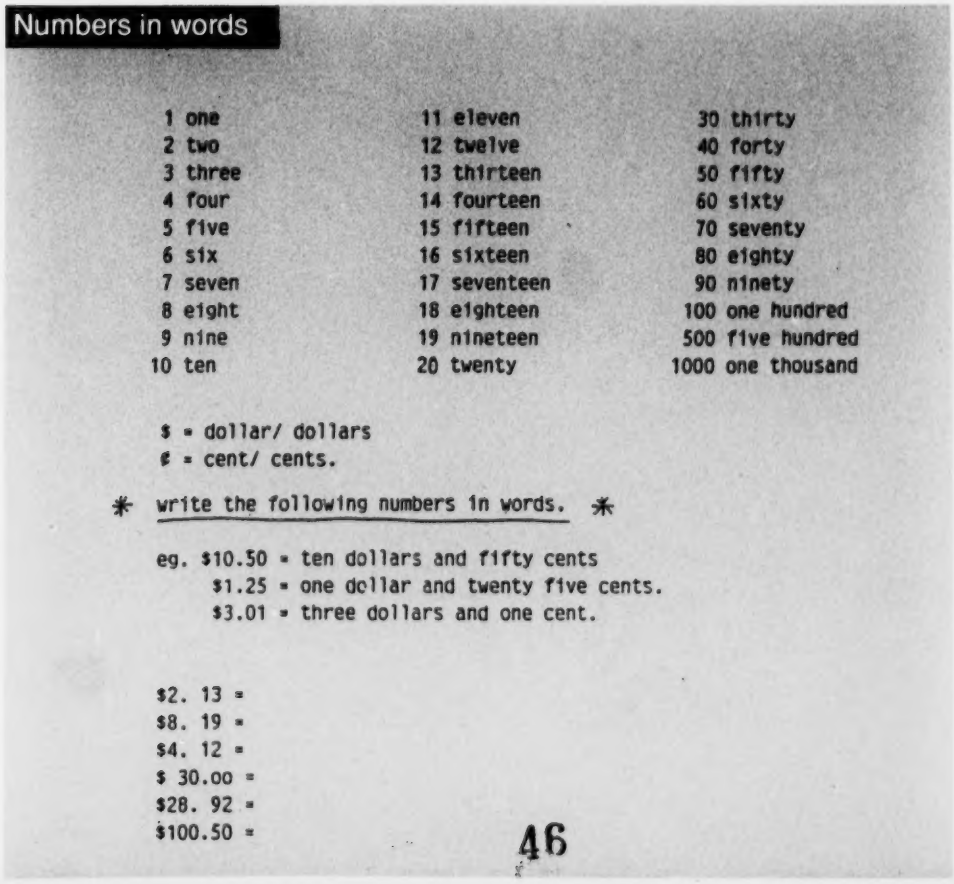
Activity 5

This cloze activity consolidates spelling practice with reading in context and for meaning.


5. Put the right word in each space.
My name is Jane and I live at 10 Brown Street, North Melbourne
I do not have a job at the moment.
I want to read a book and write a letter to my mum.
Melbourne
write
read
job
live
name

Louise and Carol's Activities:

Both Louise and Carol wanted to learn to write numbers in words to help them with their banking. When two students want to work on similar topics it's a good opportunity to pair them together. This way they learn to help each other and it takes the focus away from the tutor. I asked Louise to read out the worksheet with Carol and then complete the exercise.



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Fran and Connie's Activities

Fran and Connie are not very familiar with grammatical and sentence structures as English is their second language and therefore cannot rely as much on their knowledge of oral language. They need very specific and clear models to follow. They have been having trouble with the past tense and verb endings – thus this worksheet. I asked Connie to read out the worksheet with Fran and complete the exercises.

'was' and 'ing' endings

'was' and 'ing' endings

eg: I was walking in the park

Put in the correct word(s) when you see this sign (^)

1. I ^ talking ^ friend

2. She ^ eating ^ cake

3. He ^ swimming ^ sea

4 Fran ^ writing ^ letter

5. Connie ^ reading ^ newspaper

6. I ^ singing ^ shower

7. She ^ knitting ^ gloves

8. He ^ baking ^ bread

Barbara's Activities

Barbara wanted some work on expanding her sentences. I explained the purpose of the worksheet to her and she completed it.

Sentence expansion

Expand these sentences by adding words or phrases where you see the slashes.

eg. / Don / has landed a / job
Though work is scarce, Don, who lives next door, has landed a job at the local supermarket.

1. / Sharon / has left school /

2. / Kerrie / goes straight home /

3. / the / house / burnt down

4. The / bus / stalled in the / street /

5. The / magazine / features a / diet /

6. Her / sister enjoys / music

7. After / dinner / Nabeela fell / ill

8. The / thing / is to avoid panic /

9. John's father / gives him / pocket money /

10. / the Mercedes / hit the / Honda /

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Group Work: Reading from *'Crash in the Jungle'* (Jim Alderson, Spiral Paperback, Hutchinson, London, 1983) Chapters 5 & 6.

I decided to do a prediction exercise using chapter 5 as it would be particularly helpful for Carol and Louise who find it difficult to concentrate and take in what they read. I explained that this exercise helps readers to make informed guesses when reading and to read with understanding.

I outlined that I will be reading one paragraph of the story at a time and then I'll ask the group to guess, from what they know of the story already, what might happen next. I began by enlisting from the group a summary of what has happened in the story so far. I had made enough copies of the material to be read for each person in the group and had cut up the chapter into paragraph sections. I distributed the first section and read it out. Then I asked the following questions: Who is speaking? What is happening? Where is it happening! What might happen next? As the students made comments I encouraged them to use the information in the section and their prior knowledge of the text as evidence for their predictions.

I distributed the next section and this time I asked if someone else wanted to read it out. Barbara agreed to do it. Comments from the group were either confirmed or changed and again I encouraged them to use the two sections as evidence for their re-assessment of the story so far and their added predictions. I continued in this way until the passage was completed. The value of this execise lies in the discussion and referral to the text because it offers an opportunity to explore the reading process. The group found this a useful exercise and Carol and Louise made numerous contributions during the discussion. We then read Chapter 6 – each student who wanted to read, read a page.

Evaluation

I read out the evaluation questions on the plan sheet and asked each student to complete the evaluation by answering the questions. I scribed for Carol on a separate piece of paper and then I asked her to copy her comments on the evaluation sheet. I did the same for Fran and Connie. Jane asked me how to spell a few words she wanted to use and I wrote them on the white board. Students keep a copy of their plan (incl. evaluation) in their folders. I looked at what each student had written and took note of any relevant information that will help with my planning of the next class.

LESSON TWO

PLAN FOR LESSON 2

Carol will not be here today

- **Spelling Practice** – using an appropriate method
- **Group Work** – last week we agreed to look at 'Work' as a topic I've chosen a story called 'Factory Work' for us to read and we will then be doing some exercises based on the story

BREAK

- **Group Work** – we'll be talking and writing about 'Work'
- **Evaluation** – What did you do this session? Was it useful?

  What went well?

  What further work you need?

  What would you like to do next week?

NOTES ON LESSON TWO

Spelling Practice: Students practised their individual spelling words using a method.

Group Work: To look at 'work' as a topic I chose a story written by a student as stimulus material. I typed up the story in large print with a few words on each line because this assists the non-readers in the group to learn to scan the print thus making it easier to read and follow the material.

FACTORY WORK

I worked in a factory for twenty five years.
It was called 'Working Style'.
We made trousers.
Our supervisor would make us write down
how many trousers we made everyday.
If one day I did twenty pairs
the next day she expected twenty five.
I did the same every day.
I didn't want to give more.
I just pretended that I didn't hear her.

One day she gave me a really hard job
and I hurt my arm.
After a few days,
the pain was too hard to bear.
I complained to the manager
and he just laughed at me.
So I took a day off
and I went to see the Doctor.
He put me off work for two weeks
because my arm was really sore
and the work was too heavy.
The next day I brought the
Doctor's certificate to my boss
and he sacked me.

MARIA.

1. How long did Maria work in this factory?
2. Why did she ignore what the supervisor wanted her to do?
3. How did she hurt her arm?
4. Why did the Manager sack her?

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Activity 1 – Reading the story titled 'Factory Work'

1. I handed out a copy of the story to be read to each student
2. Before we read the story, I asked students to predict from the title of the story and its female author – which I read out – what they thought the story might be about
3. I chose the four most difficult words in the text – expected, pretended, certificate, supervisor – and read each out in context. I checked to see whether everyone knew their meaning
4. I then read out the four questions that follow the story and I asked students to make further predictions about the content, using the questions as clues
5. I also asked the students to keep these questions in mind as we read the story because it will help them to answer them later on
6. I asked for a volunteer to read out the story. Barbara accepted and I asked her to read it slowly so that everyone can follow
7. Barbara read the story while the others followed the text
8. We spent about 5 minutes discussing and answering the questions and Connie and Fran shared their similar experiences with Factory Work

I then handed out a copy to each student of the worksheets containing Activities 2 – 6 which I prepared and related to the story. I explained the purpose of each activity and asked students to work in pairs so that they can help each other. Students chose their own pairs. The groupings were as follows: Barbara with Fran, Louise with Connie and Jane.

Activity 2 – True/False Statements

I explained that this activity will help students to check whether they have obtained the correct information from the story by skimming through the story to find out.

Read the following statements based on the story and say whether they are true or false by putting a tick in the right column.

	TRUE	FALSE
. Maria worked in 'Working Style' for five years.		
. The supervisor wanted the workers to produce more trousers each day.		
. The manager laughed at Maria when she complained.		
. The manager sacked Maria.		

Activity 3 – Cloze, using a passage from the text

I explained that this activity will help students learn to scan when they read to pick up enough information to make a guess at what the word might be. I deleted the words that occur frequently in reading material to assist the non-readers in the group. I asked the students to complete this activity without looking at the text and I stressed that it's not important that they put in the same word as in the text as long as the word they put maintains the meaning.

'Cloze' activity. Read the passage below and put in the missing words.

One day she _____ me a really hard _____ and I hurt my _____. After a _____ days, the pain was too _____ to bear. I complained to _____ manager and he just laughed at _____. So I took a _____ off and I _____ to see the Doctor.

Activity 4 – Alphabetical order

I explained that this activity will help students to develop an idea of how alphabetical listing is organised and I gave as examples – dictionary, phone book, street directory.

Now put these words in alphabetical order.

went _____
day _____
the _____
hard _____
gave _____
want _____
this _____

Activity 5 – Spelling Patterns

I explained that this activity helps students to recognise spelling patterns by learning a list of words that have that pattern in them and that this helps them to rely on visual rather than phonic clues to spelling.

Put in **er** or **ea** to make the word

trous . . ers	c . . tificate	y . . rs
h . . vy	ev . . yday	r . . lly
b . . r	manag . .	sup . . visor

List three more words with **er** in and three with **ea** in

When everyone had finished each group compared their answers. Then we did Activity 6 as a whole group.

Activity 6 – Discussion using 4 ideas as stimulus [see page 54]

1. I read out the first idea, then we made a list on the white board of good and bad working situations and discussed how some bad working situations can be improved. We made another list on the white board of these suggestions.

2. I asked for a volunteer to copy out these lists and make a photocopy for each student. Jane agreed to do it because she feels that copying helps her with reading development and also she's proud of her hand-writing.

At this point we had a coffee break.

3. After the break I read out the second idea and asked each student to give one word that they associate with the word 'work' and I wrote each word on the white board.

4. We then discussed what work means to us.

5. I read out the other two ideas and we discussed them briefly.

6. I asked students to choose one of the 4 ideas as a focus on writing about work.

7. I stressed that they concentrate on composition and not worry too much about transcription – ie. spelling, punctuation etc – because we can correct that later.

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Activity 6 – Some ideas to talk about and write about:

1. What do you think makes a good working situation and a bad working situation?

2. Discuss what the word work means to you.

3. Describe a job you've had that you liked or disliked.

4. Describe the sort of work you do now - eg. study, being a mother, volunteer work, housework.

8. Three students chose to describe a job that they had in the past and two students chose to write about the present work that they do.

I wrote these two topics on the white board and invited from students a list of ideas for each topic about what information to include when writing their stories. I then added other ideas that the students hadn't mentioned.

9. I assisted Louise in getting started by scribing the first couple of sentences and reassured her not to worry about her spelling.

Barbara & Louise started writing.

I scribed for Fran and Connie, each in turn, a brief outline of their experiences. They read it and I asked them to copy it out.

I did some language experience work with Jane. I wrote down a number of sentences as she dictated them to me. I read out her story and then she read it out to me. I asked her to copy it then chose sentences at random and asked her to read each out. She stumbled on some words and I asked her to have a guess at what the word might be by reading on. I then asked her to continue the story by attempting a couple of sentences on her own.

10. We were running out of time so I asked Barbara, Louise and Jane to continue their stories at home and Connie and Fran to copy out their stories one more time at home.

11. We then completed the Evaluation.

Chapter 4 Group 3

Aileen Treloar – FROM READING TO WRITING TO READING

At the end of 1983, the Access Department at CAE suffered severe budget cuts. Helen Gribble, then Co-ordinator of the literacy program, realized she could respond negatively and reduce the number of classes, or positively and do something different. There was a pool of experienced tutors whom she thought could benefit from working together in teams while at the same time offering students the choice of more sessions. This new program format, a challenge to all and not without its difficulties, has been described and analysed at some depth in *'Opportunity to do Brilliantly'* (Grant, Canberra, 1987) [see Reading List]. This, like any research project captures a fragment in the life of a program which is passing and changing during and because of the process of the research.

The work I shall discuss took place in one of those groups exploring team teaching. Three small classes met together as a larger group for one segment of the lesson time then either carried on together or dispersed back to the original small groups. The larger group in which I worked began with a story time for which tutors took turns to choose and read. This was followed by discussion which in my small group was always followed by writing.

Members of the small group:

Warren, in his thirties, rebuilding his life after personal and family troubles.

Prue, a woman in her forties building self esteem, rebuilding her life after personal and family troubles.

Edith, a woman in her forties who suffered severe brain damage as a baby which resulted in Cerebral Palsy and mild intellectual disability. She had been attending a TAFE College program but a revision of eligibility criteria excluded her, she was then accepted by CAE.

Iris, in her fifties came from the same college program as Edith and was also said to be mildly intellectually disabled.

James, in his sixties, very nervous, easily stressed, was on a Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension.

Barbara, a volunteer tutor, also worked with the group.

I inherited this group from another tutor during the early part of the year. They were used to a formal, structured approach with lots of copying and work sheets: busy work. The group was very safe and cosy, the members of it being very dependent on both their tutor and their families. I wanted to change this for a variety of educational reasons.

Their behaviour showed a marked reluctance to take risks yet learning in general and reading and writing in particular requires the taking of risks. Learning also involves change but it was difficult to discern change taking place in their lives. Independent reading, and writing especially, were feared and avoided. There seem to be links between dependent behaviour and failure to read on the one hand and independence and the development of reading and writing skills. (Grant in *Readings in Adult Basic Education*, ACAL 1985). Passivity is linked to dependence. Are students generating messages or are they receiving them? Are they managing their own lives or are they being managed? Empowerment is a word that has been done to death, but it is relevant in this context.

My understanding of language and learning processes

I want to discuss briefly language learning and learning generally and then to evaluate this inherited approach and the one that I instituted against that framework.

Reading and writing, speaking and listening are all dimensions of language, which constantly interact with each other and which are integrated with thought. Burke (Harste, Woodward & Burke,

1984, quoted in *Spell by Writing*), [see Reading List]) has developed a model which she calls The Linguistic Data Pool.

I am not particularly happy with any diagrammatic representation I have seen of the Linguistic Data Pool; they all look static for what is such a dynamic process. I would like to see something more like a pond, complete with lily pads and the odd frog, knowing that what appeared to be clear water was in fact teeming with pond life of every description, and molecules in rapid motion. We cannot see all that microscopic life but it is there in a state of enormously vibrant energy. This image comes closer to what is happening with our language processes. Every time we do anything with language – reading or writing, speaking or listening, that language activity takes place within the linguistic data pool. It acts on and with all other language we have, enriching and changing our understanding and our usage. No dimension or aspect of language stands alone, it is part of that throbbing, pulsating pond life. Since each new language experience (or use, or transaction) adds to and influences and changes our total understanding and experience, each language activity enriches every other.

I have noticed so often that if I talk a lot with students their writing improves. I notice that if they write a lot their reading improves and if they read a lot their writing improves. I and others have noticed that we write like the authors we read. (I talk like them too. Virginia Woolf, Anthony Powell and Ivy Compton-Burnett all have a marked and very different effect on my internal dialogue, my speech and my writing. Fortunately, the major effect gets taken into the life of the pool and I seem to keep in use the bits I want).

What does this mean in pactice? It means we do not have to have a balanced serve of each dimension of language every time we meet with students – a bit like a scientifically balanced meal, a serve of protein, a green leafy veg, a yellow one and something I forget – but it is alright if sometimes we mostly talk and sometimes we mostly read and sometimes we mostly write. All of these activities are enriching each other. It means we can all relax and enjoy ourselves.

And why are we using language anyway? It has to do with meaning and purpose, how and why we communicate with ourselves and with others, in the present time or across time. That is the only way we use it. We do not take bits of it in disembodied form and try to fix them up. That would be like cutting off a leg and then wiggling the toes to make calf muscles work. If language is whole and has a purpose, language activities must be whole and with purpose.

How do we learn language, or anything else for that matter when we are in a natural learning situation rather than a formal one? The first thing is that the learner decides what she wants to learn. If I want to know how to tile my bathroom wall I will not give you my full attention if you come to teach me to build a fence, which, as it happens, I also need to know. I will only be able to learn how to tile a wall at my own pace which is likely to be a lot slower than other potential learners. Since this will be something new for me I will do it as well as I possibly can; it will be far from perfect but I will be getting as close as I can to the way I have been shown. I will learn most successfully if my teacher is encouraging, accepts that I am doing my best and is positive about the whole learning activity. If my teacher says I am the most clumsy tiler anyone ever worked with and the tiles will all probably fall off anyway, then I will feel terrible and will be unlikely to repeat the experience.

The same principles apply where language learning is involved: the learner sets the agenda; the learner sets the pace; learning thrives in a positive environment; learning takes place through a series of approximations. I would like to return to this later.

So, with a holistic understanding of language and an acceptance of natural learning principles, I have a framework within which to evaluate the work this group of students had been doing as well as the work I was proposing to do.

Evaluation of the Previous Programme

The comprehension exercises James had been doing with his previous tutor and which he insisted on continuing with concerned me on several grounds. The subject matter was esoteric and the idiom American. Moreover the style in which the passages were written was stilted; it not only lacked natural language flow but, because of its contrived nature, had very little of the natural redundancy which normally helps us when we are reading unfamiliar material. Richness is a help not a hindrance in getting the meaning. The multiple choice questions and the worksheets left no room for approximation; the answers were right or wrong. The teacher in this situation has the power both to determine the question and decide the answer. In this situation what are the students

learning about learning? That there are absolutes? That teachers have power? That students are powerless? Students are in a win/lose, open/closed, in/out situation. One other facet of this relevant to me was the mind bending, crashingly boring nature of the task. Life is too short to be so seriously bored.

If we want students to become readers we have to show them what readers do. If we want them to read stories we must give them the experience of stories so they know what it ***feels*** like to live inside the life of a story. If we want them to read book language we must give them the experience of book language.

These are practical reasons. I also happen to believe passionately that literature is life expanding; it helps me to make sense of my inner turmoil; it lets me live other lives in other ages; it lets me share other peoples' experience, gives me insight into other cultures, shapes my life and language and gives me joy. I want students to know that too and one way I can do that is by reading to them and sharing with them in that way. Homer's *Odyssey* was told long before it was ever written as were Norse sagas and Biblical sories. Print is a new comer in the history of sharing stories.

For these reasons, sharing a story, a good story or a good poem which I really like (and it is important that I like it, because if I act as if it is nasty tasting medicine then that is the attitude the students will pick u – is an essential part of any lesson. What do I do when I share the experience of a book with a friend? We talk about the bits we like 'What did you think of the bit when she...?' 'I wasn't really convinced when...' 'What about the ending?' 'I love this bit' – and rummage to find the page to read it again and savour it afresh. Never, under normal circumstances would I say to a friend, 'Who were the main characters?' 'What were their names?' 'Where was the story set?' 'What happened first?' How futile and how sterile. What does that have to do with readers reading?

Recently, with another group, I have been exploring the issue of how to give new readers the experience of living in a story, that complexity of thought and feeling that keeps me returning to some texts over and over again. Listen to that group of beginning readers discussing *The Highwayman*, (Alfred Noyes, illust. Charles Keeping, Oxford University Press, 1985.) and notice their obvious passionate involvement in the experience of the story.

Jan: 'How come she refers to him as the dead man?'

James: 'These are king's men?'

Aileen: 'We keep forgetting – he's so handsome. They're like good guys – but sort of bad guys.'

Jan: 'But also it's the way they've done it – like tying her up and drinking the landlord's ale. Tying her up and kissing her and tying a gun under her breasts – you don't think that is a good guy type of thing to do. They just so...'

Andy: 'Oh, don't get excited.'

Jan: 'You could understand if.. You can understand, like Tim, dobbing the robber in and waiting for him, but what's that got to do with her, getting her tied up?'

Andy: 'Are they jealous?'

Jan: 'But he wouldn't even know if she was tied up or not, would he? They would just shoot, wouldn't they as soon as they saw him? They're worse than the robbers aren't they?'

Discussion about a story often leads on to discussion of life, our lives now or a re-evaluation of past life in the light of this new experience. 'What would I have done?', in response to the story, becomes what I did do and what I could have done, which leads to, 'In this present situation I could do this or this,' that is, I have options which I can evaluate and then make an informed decision.

The choice of the material we read in that larger group was rich and varied. The most important thing about it was that we tutors were sharing something we liked oursleves. There was no sense in which we 'found something suitable for students.' That would have been false, sterile, joyless. Over a period of months we shared poems by writers diverse as Spike Milligan, Shel Silverstein, Walter de la Mare; short stories by Henry Lawson were very popular; there was a time when various creation myths were a continuing interest; folk stories; modern stories. Sometimes students brought things from home and shyly offered them. I sometimes wondered how often they had looked at their books, how often they had longed to read them for themselves. It was the volunteer in our group

who saw what was happening when I was being obtuse. 'Their souls are thirsty and they need to be fed,' she said, and she was right.

When we were reading the stories some students wanted to follow the text but others did not. I was happy for them to do what they wished believing that when they were ready for the step of following the text they would.

The action of our sessions was fluid but it is within a logical and coherent framework. The tutor reads to the group, the group talks about the story (if it wants to) and about other things then we write.

Sometimes it is important for the tutor to write too so the students see a writer writing. Writers work in successive approximations too. We make spelling mistakes, we cross out ill-chosen words to substitute something which may seem better and which may itself be changed later. We cross out sentences, paragraphs, whole pages as we come closer to what we are aiming for. (I did not write this chapter easily in one sitting but over many days, through many drafts and frequent conferences. Process writing is alive and well.)

So, these students began to write, but it did not just happen. The first time I asked James to write something I thought I had killed him; he went purple and shook and was quite unable to speak. He finally grumbled and produced his medical card which said he suffered from severe hypertension and must not be subjected to stress. I was still quietly determined that I was going to get him writing and he was equally determined that he was going to continue with his busy work which I was going to mark.

The Most Memorable Day

On the most memorable day of all, John, one of the members of the extended group, brought a tape of Kamahl singing a sentimental song about a father and his daughter which reminded me of Sleeping Beauty. I asked if they knew the story. Not one of them did, so I went to the library to borrow a copy to read to them. It was the collection retold by Iona and Peter Opie.

When the story was finished we began to talk about elements in the story, of how fathers love their daughters and want to protect them. As in the Kamahl tape they grow up and grow away from their fathers and live their own lives. We talked about the ugliness of jealousy and envy and its power to destroy. How our lives can become hedged in just as Sleeping Beauty's was inside the castle so that it's as if something inside us is dead but is in fact asleep, and needs the help of someone to set us free and wake us up. One of the other tutors in this group said, 'It's as if your life is hidden under the thorns and branches' – and she used her arms to cover her head which she curled into her chest – 'and when the helper comes, like the prince, and it might be your literacy tutor, you unfold and come to life and live a new life' – and her body unfolded and opened out. Now it was interesting that she intuitively used her body in that way because one of the signs we see of student progress is so often a physical opening out, heads are held high, backs are straightened.

There was silence while we all thought about that. It is important to allow a group to be silent; that is often a time of profound sharing and exchange. It is good to be comfortable together in silence. After the silence, the conversation changed and students wanted to move to deeper more painful levels. They were thinking of the ways they had been hedged in; how parts of them had nearly died under the spell of their reading and writing difficulties.

John, who brought the tape said, 'You know once, when I was a young fellow I had a girl. Real sweet I was on her. Well, one night I was at her place, see, and there was this other couple. They started to talk about school or education or something and I thought "Geeze, next thing I know they'll be asking me to read," so I got up to go to the toilet and just kept going.'

Aileen: 'Did you contact her again?'

John: 'No, never saw her again.'

Aileen: 'Do you think she might have wondered what happened to you?'

John: 'Real sweet on her, I was. She was a corker.'

Aileen: 'She's probably still wondering to this day what she did wrong. Did you ever wonder what she must have been feeling that you just walked out on her? What she'd done wrong?'

John: 'No, I never did. I went off to the country. We used to climb into the freight cars and hide.'

James was silent for a long time when people were talking and was too nervous to join in the group discussion. Later, he told me quietly.

James: 'I was in a field hospital in New Guinea. I had a broken leg. That's where I had my twenty first birthday - in a field hospital.'

Aileen: 'How about you write that. It doesn't matter about your spelling, we can fix that later, just get your story down.'

He began to write but was uncomfortable and said 'I'll finish this at home.' (I knew he relied heavily on his wife and wondered if he would let her to do it for him). He had got as far as 'I spent my 21st birthday in a field hospital in New Guinea.' I helped him with 'field', 'hospital', 'New Guinea'.

The next week he came with a story he was very pleased with and rightly so. 'I spent my twenty first birthday in a field hospital in New Guinea with a broken leg. No party or cake with candle, just glad to be alive.' He was too shy to read it to the group but was happy for me to submit it to the *Go-Between*, a magazine which published student writing.

Iris had to have help to spell every letter of every word. Edith dictated a sentence but it was a loud and painful process.

Aileen: 'What would you like to write about?'

Edith: 'I can't write.'

Aileen: 'That's alright. You tell me what you want to say and I will write it for you. It is still your story.'

Edith: 'When I was little my father called me his princess.'

Aileen: 'Ok – "*When I was little my father called me his princess.*"'

Edith: 'Does that say *"princess"*?'

Aileen: 'Yes. Would you like to read your story?'

Edith: 'When I was little my father called me his princess. . . He used to rock me to sleep.'

Aileen: 'How about you write that?'

Edith: 'I can't spell the words.'

Aileen: 'That's alright. You do your best and we'll fix it up later.'

Edith" 'He, H...e, used, I don't know used.'

Aileen: 'Can you have a try?'

Edith: 'No, I don't know that word.'

Aileen: 'OK It's like that.' (I write it for her on another piece of paper)

Edith: 'He used to – what did I say?'

Aileen: 'He used to rock me to sleep. Here, you've said "He used to ..." now you're up to "rock".'

Edith: 'rok - He used to rock m..e. When I was a baby the hospital dropped me on my head. My father used to look after me. He used to take me out with him.'

Aileen: 'He must have loved you very much. Fathers do love their daughters.'

Edith: 'He called me his princess.'

Aileen: 'How about you finish your story. So far you've said, "When I was little my father called me his princess. He used to rock me.." What was the rest you were going to say?'

Edith: 'He used to rock me to sleep.'

Aileen: 'OK 'He used to rock me. . . ' What's the next bit?'

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There is more to the process of writing than the talk, write, talk, edit, proof read, publish. There is the process by which terrified students, whose fears paralyse them into perceived inability to write, become confident writers. This takes time, sometimes a very long time.

Four years after these events, I had a letter from Barbara who is working with Iris (she was then the volunteer working in that program). She wrote, 'And Iris has been writing more than the stipulated amount and today brought in her 2 or 3 pages of rough drafts, along with her good writing and she talks about how she has a go, then asks her sister, has another go and then shoves it down and leaves it and turns to something quite different and then goes back to it (the writing).'

It is a matter of moving at the students' pace. 'What I can do with help today I can do alone tomorrow'. Tomorrow may come slowly but cannot be hastened by outside pressure. When students want to work on tasks at home they do; they are learning, they are controlling its subject and pace and there is energy in it.

As the weeks progressed James became more confident in the group. One week someone brought a news item about a man who had fallen into molten metal. James said, 'That would have spoilt it. It would all be wasted.' This was a new line on foundry accidents. James turned out to have been a moulder. He brought his tools he had made as an apprentice, showed them to the group and described their use. When I found it hard to understand how the moulding process worked he spent the week doing an annotated diagram for me. There was humour in it too. From being shy, silent and paralysed by nervous stress, James had become the relaxed star of the group. He wrote more and more copiously about his childhood on a dairy farm, his siblings and his daughter. The more he wrote, the more he could write and the more confident he became.

This group was particularly fortunate in that we had a gifted volunteer, Barbara working alongside the tutors. She sat with the nervous, noticed who was stressed or distressed, gave attention where it was needed, helped Edith or Iris where they needed someone to 'carry' the story for them while they wrote. She was particularly helpful with two more advanced students who wanted help with editing tasks and spelling. She was also a keen observer of the soul of the group; at times it was like having a discerning and critical eye.

Another student, Mary, joined the group. She clutched a bottle of whiteout like a security blanket. Barely a word went by that was not embellished, obliterated or textured by whiteout. Habits like this can become extraordinarily irritating, out of all proportion. Barbara and I took this student in turns. She wanted to write a letter to her mother, something she had never done, ever. When she finally did, her mother cried, framed it and hung it on her living room wall, whiteout and all. We could not persuade Mary to keep writing and come back later to revise. Then one week she said she wasn't going to do anything. Barbara, the volunteer, said 'Yes you are and I am too. We are both going to write for five minutes' – and Barbara took her pen and began to write so Mary did too, at first hesitantly, then Barbara noticed that Mary's body had relaxed, the knuckles about the whiteout were looser and the lid was still on the bottle. Twenty minutes later, Mary sat back and said with great satisfaction, 'I'm all writ out', folded her page and put it away in her purse. We never did know what she wrote but it hardly mattered. The important thing was she had written something that was important to her, she had done it unaided and she was satisfied.

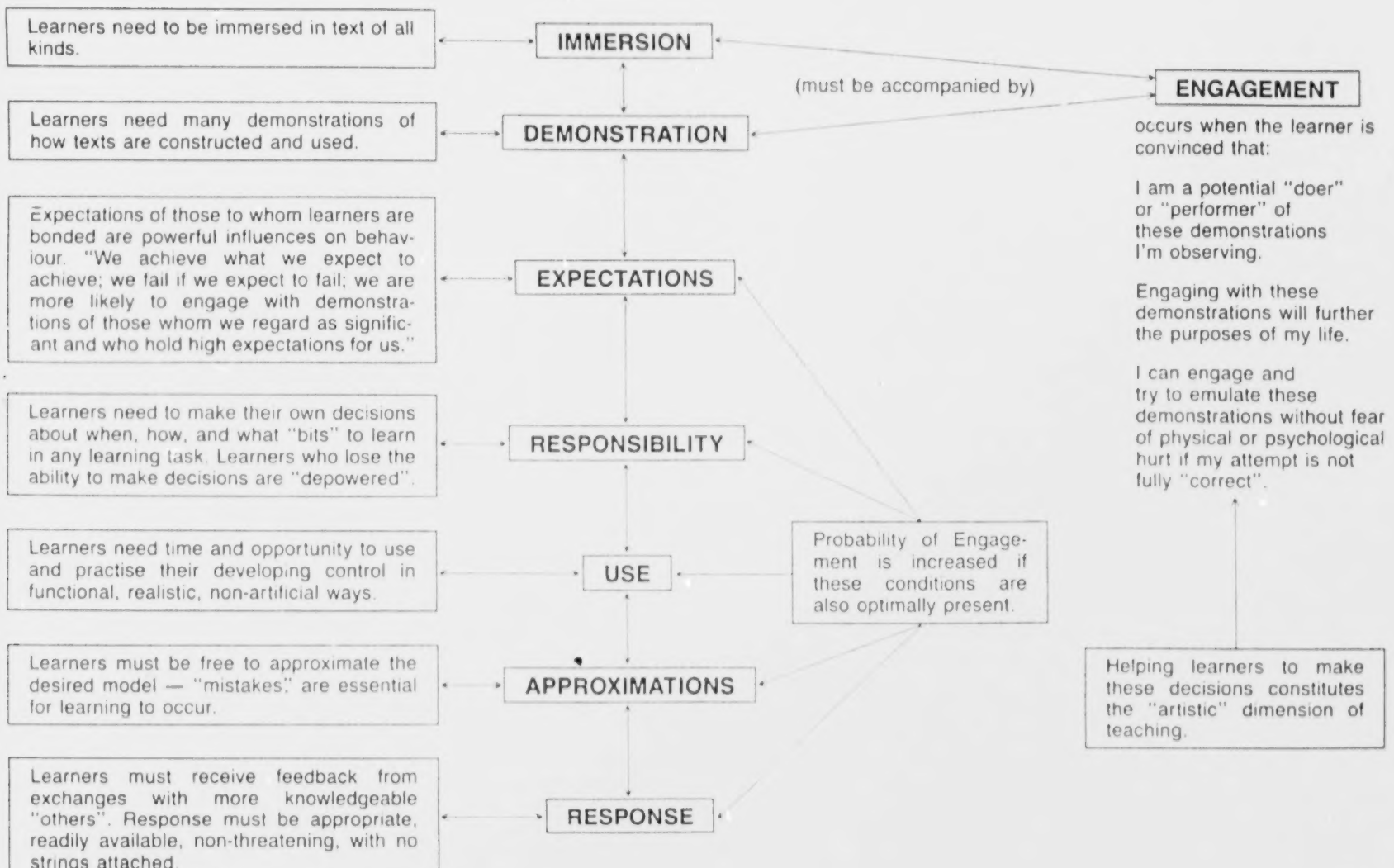
[I did not know Brian Cambourne's model of learning then but it seems relevant as I apply it now. (PEN No.65, Primary English Teaching Association, 1987)] [see page 61]

Engagement: This is the enabling factor in many ways. James did not see himself as a 'potential doer' of any tasks other than the set exercises he was given. It was difficult to see how those tasks furthered the purposes of his life. Given the nature of those tasks he was frequently in a position where he was not fully right and the fear he showed when confronted with different tasks indicated that he felt a need to be 'fully correct'.

Immersion: When we read stories to the group we were not only immersing the students in a variety of texts but were also offering a variety of non-threatening ways of engaging in a language activity.

Demonstration: We offered many different ways of responding to texts, many different ways of constructing texts, in all of which there was no sense of being fully 'correct'.

THE CONDITIONS OF LITERACY LEARNING (after Brian Cambourne)


Learners need to be immersed in text of all kinds.
IMMERSION
(must be accompanied by)
ENGAGEMENT
occurs when the learner is convinced that:
I am a potential "doer" or "performer" of these demonstrations I'm observing.
Engaging with these demonstrations will further the purposes of my life.
I can engage and try to emulate these demonstrations without fear of physical or psychological hurt if my attempt is not fully "correct".
Learners need many demonstrations of how texts are constructed and used.
DEMONSTRATION
Expectations of those to whom learners are bonded are powerful influences on behaviour. "We achieve what we expect to achieve; we fail if we expect to fail; we are more likely to engage with demonstrations of those whom we regard as significant and who hold high expectations for us."
EXPECTATIONS
Learners need to make their own decisions about when, how, and what "bits" to learn in any learning task. Learners who lose the ability to make decisions are "depowered".
RESPONSIBILITY
Learners need time and opportunity to use and practise their developing control in functional, realistic, non-artificial ways.
USE
Probability of Engagement is increased if these conditions are also optimally present.
Learners must be free to approximate the desired model — "mistakes" are essential for learning to occur.
APPROXIMATIONS
Helping learners to make these decisions constitutes the "artistic" dimension of teaching.
Learners must receive feedback from exchanges with more knowledgeable "others". Response must be appropriate, readily available, non-threatening, with no strings attached.
RESPONSE

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Expectations: We very clearly had expectations that every member of the class would write, one way or another. Initially the only expectation was that they would write at all but later more was expected. There is a nice distinction between accepting any effort on the part of a student and gently expecting more in the way of refinement of expression and correction of surface details such as spelling and grammar. This latter point becomes important where it makes the difference between carelessness or careful presentation. The purpose for the communication will determine the degree of attention to the form.

Responsibility: The greatest deficiency in set work defined by the tutor is that it takes decision making away from the students. The talking and writing we were doing left the student in control; theirs were the decisions about what to write, how to write it and how to present it.

Use: Set work is artificial and unrealistic; it offers few opportunities to develop control in non-artificial ways. The free writing we did gave them complete control over their learning and over how they used their growing control over language.

Approximations: Learners must be free to make 'mistakes'. Work sheets with their right/wrong approach deny this learning experience. Our approach of 'Get it down and we'll fix it up later' was not only demonstrating approximation but through it providing learning opportunities.

Response: When we work in this way we constantly provide an appropriate response that meets the student's learning needs at that time in the way that is appropriate to that time. Response needs to be sincere not falsely patronizing.

When all of this happens in a positive environment, when the learner joins the group of doers as a new doer, then learning has begun to take place. There is never any doubt about when this has happened for there is energy in the situation. When there is this energy, homework is no longer a problem but a pleasure because for all of us, the feel of learning is so addictive and seductive that we want to experience the experience over and over again.

Where does reading come into this program which I have called Reading to Writing to Reading? Once students begin to write they are reading all the time with the assumption that reading is concerned with meaning. They know this because when they wrote, they wrote with the intention of conveying meaning. (One of the most common reading problems students demonstrate is that reading is getting every word right with no thought for meaning). As they become more experienced writers, so does their reading improve as they scan rapidly looking for meaning, feeling for syntax. Reading their own text is always an achievable task as they are working in an environment of positive response to their own agenda at their own pace. This experience plus the experience of hearing stories creates an environment in which reading develops.

Our writers had become readers and as readers they will become more confident writers. The language pool is clearer, deeper and teeming with life.

Kaye Elias – DEVELOPING THE WRITING HABIT

Background

This course was initially identified as a basic education course in reading and writing. The students were a group of workers from an industrial storage site in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The sessions were for three hours, on a Friday afternoon during work time, running for 30 weeks. A small bare room was set aside at the workplace for the classes. It had three laminex tables, chairs, a whiteboard and a lock-up filing cabinet. In the summer months it was stifling, in the winter months it was like a fridge.

The Class

The group formed as a result of interviews between the staff from Workplace Basic Education Project and interested workers at the workplace. There were six students in the class, five men and one woman. The men worked as forklift drivers and storepersons, moving stock in and out of long storage sheds. The one woman had clerical duties and so at work had more contact with print than the men did.

Class Rapport

The workers in the class all knew each other, though they didn't necessarily have close contact with each other at work. A good group feeling between the students themselves and between the tutor and students was established from the outset. During the course the students always wanted to share what they had written with the group, wanted to get the group's comments about what they had written and were able to have amicable discussions and debate without necessarily agreeing. Joking and 'taking the mickey' out of each other (and me) was always part of the classes. Confidentiality in the classes allowed people to freely express opinions about the position of workers in 'their' workplace.

The Students

Garry male, 51 years. Left school at 14 years of age. Read the newspaper and some fiction. Lacked confidence to write.

Helga female, 43 years. Born in Austria, came to Australia aged 10. Left school at 17 years. Read fiction and autobiographies. Wanted letter writing, improved word skills and to gain confidence in writing. Did some writing at home.

Warren male, 27 years. Left school at 17 years. Failed English at school. Read books, magazines about his hobby – music. Wrote a social club newsletter, someone typed it for him.

Antonio male, 52 years. Born in Italy, left school aged 12 and came to Australia at 21. Learnt English by listening and teaching himself from books. Read the newspaper. Got frustrated with his writing.

Jim male, 51 years. Born in Hungary. Left school after Form 2, then went to Trade School. Came to Australia at 20. Picked up English at work. Occasionally read the newspaper. Very poor spelling hampered his attempts at writing.

Carl male, 44 years. Born in Croatia. Left school at 17. Came to Australia at 23. Attended Adult Migrant Education Service classes. Read newspaper and books. Wanted to improve English skills and letter writing.

Antonio, Jim, and to a lesser extent, Carl, fit into the category of high oracy/low literacy/long term resident. They have picked up English informally and the syntax which is less noticeable in spoken English is glaringly inappropriate in writing.

All students said they wanted to improve spelling, vocabulary and punctuation. Jim had very poor spelling and really laboured over writing. The other five felt hampered by their poor spelling, and poor vocabulary. Warren said the person who typed up the social news which he wrote often had difficulty understanding it. For the others this concern over spelling and other conventions of writing prevented them from doing much writing in their daily lives.

From discussions held with the students early in the course came these comments:

Garry *'I applied for this course to help me put on paper what my mind was thinking' 'When on holidays I would like to write to my friends but I am too embarrassed' 'My wife does all the writing for us'.*

Although Garry had sufficient skills to write, he did not perceive himself as a writer.

Antonio *'We only need to write every six months or so and then we can't do it'. 'We don't need to write that often".*

Others *'I've done a crane chasers course, I haven't used what I learnt and I've forgotten it'. 'This course will probably be the same'.*

Hence I concluded at the start of these classes, that in general, writing was not much a part of these people's lives, nor did they think of themselves as writers. But, I had to remember, all students except Jim already had the potential to in fact be writers. I also felt that as blue collar workers having their say through writing was not something they thought they could do or had a right to do.

The Course

I decided, after the third week, that the course would need to change these students' self perception so that they saw themselves as writers. The key to success in the course would be to get the students to take responsibility for finding reasons to write; **to develop a writing habit.** The course must aim at real writing experiences to a real audience for a variety of real purposes.

What followed was a course which taught and practised specific punctuation and grammar, worked on spelling, vocabulary development and dictionary use, gave writing and reading practice, taught how to set out and write a letter and a work report, ***but*** in attempting to make the real change and a change for the future, a course which enabled the students to see that writing could have a real part in their world. The students went beyond the class exercises and through writing took up issues which affected their own lives.

A Course Outline

Sessions 1 - 7	Word games, work on spelling, punctuation, appropriate grammar, vocabulary; 10 minute writing sessions, reading articles (these activities continued throughout the course)
Sessions 8 - 11	Personal letters
Sessions 12 - 16	Business letters
Sessions 17 - 22	Developing opinion and argument
Sessions 23 - 25	Work related reports
Sessions 26 - 29	Job applications

Running parallel with this course was each Students Own Writing which fulfilled their own writing needs. This was being developed as the class progressed by my insistence on students finding real reasons for writing.

Session Plan: 3 hours

1. Opening exercise (15 minutes)

Examples: ***game*** 'Wheel of Fortune'
activity 'match cartoon with caption'
worksheet 'Fill the gap using prepositions'
vocabulary 'fill the gap using colloquial phrases'
dictation of known piece – students checked own work

2. Specific skill OR Free Writing (30 minutes) eg. teach use of capital letter

including sharing completed work, checking own spelling, picking out possible spelling errors, and discussing discoveries about spelling, with the whole group

3. Main activity – Set Course (see course outline above) (90 minutes) OR Students Own Writing

4. Reading/sharing (15 minutes)

5. Recapping/Planning (10 minutes)

The plan was often modified to suit students' interest and needs. A three hour session allowed a lot of time for valuable talk and chatter to take place. A break was taken somewhere in the middle, at a time when we felt we needed it.

What follows is the **Main Activity Section** of

Sessions 8 - 11 Personal Letters and

Sessions 12 - 16 Business Letters.

Alongside the Set Course will be the Students' Own Writing.

Sessions 8 - 11 Personal Letters
Sessions 12 - 16 Business Letters
going on at same time

A. Set Course
Set Exercise:
presentation of model and
practice using model

B. Own Individual writing
Using models from the Set
Course for own purposes

Sessions 8 - 11 Personal Letters

A. Set Course

Presentation of Model

1. Two personal letters, thank you letters for an anniversary gift, were presented as models (copy to each student). Letter 1 was exaggerated, too formal and just 'over the top'. Letter 2 was friendly, sincere and just said enough.

2. Students had time to read the letters to themselves.

3. Helga read Letter No. 1 to the group. It included phrases like 'our deepest heartfelt appreciation and gratitude'. We had a chuckle. Carl read out Letter 2.

4. Questions and discussion followed:

Which is the better letter?

What makes Letter No. 1 unsuitable?

What makes Letter No. 2 appropriate?

What sort of language is found in a personal letter?

We noted the structure of the letter; a beginning, a middle and an end. We talked about the relationship between the two parties and how that affects the style.

Class Exercise 1

Together on the whiteboard we composed a letter thanking a friend for sending flowers after an illness, based on the model which had been discussed.

Class Exercise 2

I had prepared topic cards which covered a variety of reasons for writing a personal letter. We decided to shuffle them and deal them out. Each student then wrote a personal letter from the topic received.

TOPICS –

- Congratulate a friend who has just become a grandparent
- Sympathise with a friend whose mother has just died
- Resolve a misunderstanding with a friend
- Thank friends for an enjoyable evening they gave you
- Cheer up a friend who will be in hospital for six months
- Apologise to a friend for failing to keep an appointment
- Invite a country friend to stay with you.

Students wrote a first draft. Proof reading skills followed were:

read it through to check meaning

read it again to check spelling – either using a dictionary or asking another student or me if necessary

read it again to check capitals, full stops, commas

I tried to give the students plenty of time to work through it themselves, unless of course I was called on for assistance (which I often was). I then went over the letter with the student making suggestions and discussing specific points. Sometimes I suggested checking in the dictionary, sometimes I gave the correct spelling. I worked more closely with Jim who had the most difficulty with writing, giving him a lot of the correct spelling.

Students wrote a second draft, and some a third draft. Everyone worked at their own pace. Antonio needed a third draft, changing things to get it to sound right. Warren was quick, sometimes too quick, and didn't proof read carefully enough. It was important to point this out to him. He got through three topic cards. His amiable style enabled him in his letter of sympathy to a friend whose mother had just died to get away with writing the line 'she wasn't a bad old bugger really'.

Jim took twice as long as the others to finish one letter. He didn't attempt to finish anything at home or copy out work I suggested would be of help.

Sessions 12 - 16 Business Letters

A. Set Course

The format for presentation was similar to that used for Personal Letters.

1. Four letters were presented as models (a copy to each student);

   Letter No. 1 used old fashioned business language; it was 'out of date'.

   Letter No. 2 showed no real concern for the customer, was abrupt and 'passed the buck'.

   Letter No. 3 was open, straight forward, polite and fostered confidence in the company

   Letter No. 4 answered a complaint, explained the situation, was diplomatic, showed the company to be trustworthy and appeared sincere in wanting to remedy the problem.

2. Students read to themselves.

3. Individual students read them to the group.

4. Questions and discussion followed:

   Which letters are 'definitely bad' and which are 'definitely good'? Why?

   What are the good letters doing that the bad ones fail to do?

   Note the form of the letter.

   Note the appropriate language to use and useful phrases.
   Underline them eg. I am very sorry . . . .
   . . . . satisfactory condition
   In the meantime . . . .
   . . . . we trust . . .
   I sincerely regret any inconvenience . . .
   I am quite confident . . . .

Class Exercise

Topic cards were distributed. Each student took a card and wrote a business letter. Topics related to situations that were relevant to the students' workplace.

TOPICS –

- Answer a complaint that goods have been received in a damaged state
- Thank forklift suppliers for enabling your firm to trial their new model and explain why it is unsuitable for your purposes
- An employee under your supervision has not received higher duty allowances; include details
- Request further storage space for your section; include facts and figures
- Request that management provide computer courses for workers in your section
- Recommend a worker under you for the Youth Award

The students had to assume roles as managers and supervisors representing their workplace or their workers. We had a discussion about how the students needed to put themselves in the place of the writer. The students worked through first draft to a final second or third draft as they had done with personal letters. I was surprised no one had any real difficulty slipping into the business letter mode even though it would never be expected of them in their job, nor would they have done it much, if ever, before. These set exercises were put in their folders and kept as a reference.

Sessions 8 - 16

B. Real World Writing

During weeks 8 -16 (and indeed for the rest of the course) the students' own individual writing for their own purposes was also being carried out in the main activity section of some of the lessons.

This was an important part of the course because I was mindful that students do the class exercises, make improvements, then when the classes stop so does the writing. The 'I've done the crane chasers course . . . ' thinking. This part of the course was ***to develop the letter writing habit.***

The writing was often started in class time and finished at home and sometimes the reverse, started at home and finished in class. Quite early in the course I started saying to the group 'We are going to do a lot of reading, writing and spelling etc in class, but you have to start finding reasons in your own life to write'. We talked about what sort of things these may be – from personal letters to letters of grievance and complaint – and to whom this writing might be addressed.

In another session I might say 'Has anything been annoying you lately? Is there something you want to sort out?' Garry, a keen Geelong supporter, said 'I was really annoyed about . . .' (a football player who tricked the public). 'I could write to Derryn Hinch' (a TV talk back show host). Garry did write and he felt very good about it. 'Boy, I wouldn't have been game to write that before the class'. Later Garry received a reply. He was very surprised, so was the group. 'Well how about that!' became our standard response as the course went on. The replies were important because it allowed the students to ***take themselves seriously as writers.***

Garry went on a three week holiday. Before he went the group discussed what sort of writing he could do while he was away – keeping a diary, sending postcards. 'We expect a long letter' I said. General laughter followed. Garry, who had been 'too embarrassed' to write sent us two full pages of news plus a postcard. Also postcards to his daughters. Continually throughout the course I passed on to the students high expectations of what they would achieve, always pushing them a bit. The group really enjoyed reading Garry's news. They said it was just like hearing him talk. We all told him so when he got back. We also discussed the pleasures of receiving special mail.

Antonio had a problem to sort out at work, about work boots. The letter he started at home was pages too long. Together we worked out ways of cutting it down to the essential information. Putting in too much unnecessary detail was a difficulty Antonio recognised in his writing. When it was ready he read it to the class. The other students said 'Good on you!'

The Seven Network

June 14, 1988.

Mr G. R.
C. Place

Dear Mr. R

Thank you for your letter.

It is hard to believe that "Hinch at Seven" is now more than 100 programmes down the track.

It may also help to explain the delay in my answering thousands of letters.

Thank you for your comments.

Obviously, we cannot follow up every issue -- or story -- but all mail is filed in case it can be used as part of a future issue we look at.

Yours sincerely,

DERRYN HINCH

21 February 1988

Mr Derryn Hinch
Channel 7 Melbourne
119 Wells Street
South Melbourne 3205

Mr G. R.
C. Place

Dear Sir,

As a football follower of many years, I think it was in bad taste the way Gerard Healy lied about hurting himself. If I was a Sydney supporter I would like him to make a public apology on television and also a written one in the daily newspaper. What a disgrace to receive a lot of phone calls and telegrams from supporters wishing him a speedy recovery.

Football players of today get paid too much money, for example Warwick Capper being paid to play with the Brisbane Bears. Money is killing football from the supporters point of view. I mean those people who go every week to see their team play, rain or shine, win or lose, the ones not so well off who live just for the next Saturday to come along. These are the people forgotten when your team is to play off in the finals you might be lucky to get some seats, but other people who just go to the finals to get their tickets very easily.

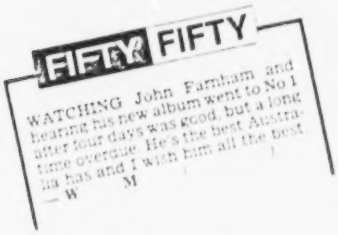
Congratulations on your television program. It keeps people on their toes.

Yours sincerely,

G

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The group was all the time ***reinforcing each others' action*** and supporting each other. The students also brought to us the comments people at work and at home had made eg. 'Did you write that?' 'That's the best you've ever done'. These also reinforced their success. A three hour class gave us enough time for discussion where these sort of comments could come out.



FIFTY FIFTY

WATCHING John Farnham and hearing his new album went to No 1 after four days was good, but a long time overdue. He's the best Australia has and I wish him all the best.

— W M

Warren wrote off to the 50-50 column in the Sun newspaper. It was a short piece about the talents of John Farnham. To his utter amazement, it was published. 'Well how about that' we all said. Someone at work spotted it before Warren did. Another class member said 'I've been looking every day but I didn't look today' (that is, the day it was published).

What was developing in the group was a ***lively interest in real communication with the real world.*** When replies from two different Councils came back to Antonio and Carl they brought them in. The group was very impressed by the official looking letterheads, the genuine and thoughtful replies and also the promise of action. So often the students had said 'I didn't think I would get a reply'. The replies were always photocopied and distributed to each student. Sometimes the students photocopied their letters or replies before coming to the class. This writing became the property of the group.

CITY OF SUNSHINE

Mr A. C.
W. Way

Dear Sir,

STREET LIGHTING.

With reference to your letter of 8th
raise your concern in regard to the
lighting at the western end of West
that following investigation I have
Public Lighting Section of the Sta
requesting:-

a) Upgrading of existing street
by having the street light
clear of the existing tree

b) To erect a street light on
73 Norwood Street.

Unfortunately, I am unable to give Yo
these works will be completed, as they wi
the Commission's overall street lighting progra

Yours faithfully,

RAY GILL,
Deputy City Engineer.

8 August 1988

Mr A. C.
W. Way

City Engineering Department
C/- Sunshine City Council
Sunshine

Dear Sir, Re: Street Lighting

I'm writing to you regarding the lack of street lighting.

The street concerned are toward the western end of Westwood Way, between Cullen Court, and Norwood Street, and on the northern side of the corner of Westwood Way in Norwood Street.

Although the existing lights are all in functioning order, I do think that the above mentioned spots are really dark and frightening especially during the winter nights.

So I do kindly ask you if there is any possibility of looking into this matter, and consider installing some extra lights. It may prevent somebody being attacked or further burglaries.

Hoping for a favourable result.

Yours faithfully

A.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

During the course, Garry became the President of the Social Club and as well as starting to write notices for members he also wrote a letter to management requesting an early finish of work for the end of year social. A new relationship through writing was being established between Garry and management. We all tut-tutted when management did not reply directly in writing to Garry as we had discussed the etiquette of reply.

The State Government was planning to build a toxic waste plant near Garry's home and Garry was planning a letter to object. Meanwhile it was reported in the newspaper that following 4,000 objections the State Government was not going ahead. Though Garry's letter was never sent, it was important to our discussion about the importance and value of having a say. It helped counter the notion 'It's no use writing – nothing will happen'.

Helga, through illness, missed many classes and although she found reasons to write she didn't get much of this writing done. Jim, who was not prepared to make time outside class time, benefited least. His greatest need was to improve his spelling skills as well as overall confidence in writing. He chose not to take up the suggested strategies for improving spelling and vocabulary.

Each week I recorded the comments made by the students and others and the noticeable change in the students' writing habits. This formed an on-going evaluation of the course. A more formal evaluation questionnaire filled out by students enabled the students to evaluate their learning. Another questionnaire filled out by other people in the workplace who came into contact with the students during worktime, recorded any noticeable changes in the students' confidence, interest in print and change in behaviour.

At the end of the course a selection of student writing as well as some of the replies received was made into a booklet entitled *'Having a Say'*.

Postscript

Since the course finished I have written letters to all the students. So far Carl, Garry, Antonio and Warren have replied. They have also sent copies of writing they have done since the class finished. Antonio told me he has written letters to sort out problems he is having with new taps. Garry sent me a newspaper cutting from the local paper. It was of his letter about traffic problems on his journey home from work each night. Warren mentions the letters he has sent to England to reserve records. He also displays his new typewriting skills. Also a Christmas card from 'the gang'. There are spelling mistakes and problems with the apostrophe but the confidence and new found writing ease comes through in all the letters. The mistakes made are not preventing these students from using writing to relate to the world around them. It is hoped with the students taking on the responsibility for their own learning, that is, using a dictionary, being more aware of spelling when they are reading the newspaper, and continued writing practice that the mistakes will get fewer.

Rosa McKenna – GETTING STARTED WITH A BEGINNER READING GROUP

Beginner Reader Group, Footscray College of TAFE
Teachers: Rosa McKenna, Dana West

Background/Setting

The class provides for one, two hour weekly session during the day. It is offered as one of the many programs conducted within the Department of Compensatory Education. Students are generally drawn through open access from the community and by referral of students from other courses within the College.

There were particular circumstances in 1988 that led to the first attempt to provide for non reading adults in a larger group than some type of individual program or smaller group arrangement. In early 1988 there was an unprecedented demand by total non readers through open access and a large number of referrals coming from the Women's Learning Centre, traineeship and pre-employment sections of the College. Students at this level had presented in smaller numbers and at unpredictable frequency during previous years. From the growing experience in the department with other adult basic education learning groups we were becoming convinced that the educational benefits for adult learners in groups should be applicable to beginner readers as well.

The group was perceived as fitting into the existing continuum of provision at the College. It was seen as the starter class from which people with few skills could gain access to other general literacy and basic education programs fairly quickly. The program was offered on a semester basis. Students would then be able to repeat a similar program or join other courses offered by the department or join their local community literacy program. In this way we could take on new students at this level in mid year.

Student selection

Students generally ring and make an enquiry about classes or are referred from other sections of the College. Each individual is interviewed at least once but sometimes in a series of counselling sessions.

During the interview we assess the student by observing how they go about particular reading and writing tasks, we note very carefully what strategies they use and how much they know about reading. We confirm those things that can be built on and demonstrate something new so that the interview can provide a taste of what is to come. We also try to take some account of students' aspirations and their 'knowledge of the world' in placing them in a program. There is a great deal of information given about what to expect in the class. Most initial interviews were conducted at the College, some took place at community centres, at home or the Womens' Learning Centre.

Group composition

All members of the group were identified as beginning readers ie. they were not consistently understanding some commonly used phrases and sight words in context. Most labelled themselves as not being able to read at all. They were all highly motivated to learn though many felt at first that they were unteachable.

Even though the group was selected because they were supposedly at a similar stage (ie. beginner readers) their backgrounds, expectations and ability vary enormously. Most have some type of disability though not many are visible.

The major intake of students occurred at the beginning of the year and most have continued on. The following students have been the stable members of the group. There are usually 9 or 10 students present at most sessions and it seems that less than 8 make our methods less effective.

Students' backgrounds

Krystina 36	non English speaking background Downs Syndrome speech difficult to understand previously drilled in some social sight words referred from small group 1987
Wendy 40+	felt she was unteachable not able to distinguish words or letters during interview identified eyesight problems later confirmed binocular vision problem very capable organiser and sociable some history of mental breakdown referred via Womens' Learning Centre
Rose 40+	non English speaking background but educated in Australia not literate in her own first language some reading skill, she reads crochet patterns history of mental breakdown uneven concentration and lack of belief in her ability referred through community program with no day time provision
Dennis 45	hearing, speech and other learning problems can read well cued material and in social situations in literacy programs for 3 years referred from group 1987
Lindsay 30+	previously drilled in common words and phonics poor memory referred from community one to one program
Alfred 50+	non English speaking background not literate in his own first language major accident 5 years ago (in pain still) referred from Commonwealth Rehabilitation Department
Pat 55	reading well cued material (drawn from her past experience) had been referred from one to one situation
Jan 35	can read but doesn't believe it wants group situation referred from Creative Writing Group Womens' Learning Centre
Danny 38	starting to read very anxious, puts a lot of pressure on himself holds fixed ideas about how to read self referred to many literacy programs experience in one to one
Lila 75	sometime attender
Mark 15	beginner reader not confident referred as part of Pre-vocational course
Sharon 15	not reading not well motivated, very defensive referred as part of Pre-vocational course

The program was to be for one semester and then a similar program offered again allowing students to move on to other half semester courses or to do additional work at a similar level if they wanted. Newcomers could join mid year.

Group organisation

The class is held in a large classroom in the Department of Compensatory Education, a fairly stuffy institutional setting. Generally people sit randomly around a group of tables, the blackboard is rarely used as most of the written material is made available through photocopies to each student. (They can mark it and take it home). I am one of two teachers involved. As teachers we plan together and divide the lesson preparation however I tend to lead the session while Dana is able to move around the group assisting where necessary. She particularly concentrates on Krystina and the newer members of the group. (We need that extra person to cope with the spontaneous copying of both printed and audio material generated by the group during the lesson).

Students were asked to bring a binder, biro and a blank audio tape. The speed audio cassette copier is essential classroom equipment, blank tapes gold!

Because of the fairly formal and institutional setting other more relaxed interactional times are encouraged. Some students always arrive early for a chat, coffee break is more than a drink, some students stay on after class, and some students now lunch together after the class. These unorganised informal elements of the group have been the most constructive part in helping the two hours of class time be productive for most students.

Midway through the series of lesson sequences described here a number of the students attended a residential writing weekend at Hall's Gap. Jan and Wendy were keen to go and enthused the whole group. Lindsay, Wendy, Jan, Krystina, Rose and Lila went. Danny, who was attending a community literacy group came with us and later joined the group as a consequence. The weekend had a significant impact for them personally and very important influence on the sessions back at College. For three of them it was the first time away from home without another family member. The organisation involved in getting the group away and the sharing of the experience on our return brought the group closer together. Meeting students from across the State gave them a real sense of identity.

Well, what do we do in two hours when two hours is not enough?

The first objective was to meld the group together; to provide a common purpose. So the first series of lessons were designed around the common concerns of getting to the College, information about getting to class and preparation for enrolment. We also wanted to give students a routine at home for practising what they were learning. After all, two hours a week is not going to make much difference and we wanted them to understand why these activities might help them read.

There are some common elements to all of the sessions that are worth pointing out

1. All sessions are initiated from a text. The program moves from the language of the whole text to phrases and words. We attempt to provide 'real reading' rather than extracts or simplified texts.

2. While the teacher plays a leading role there is considerable input from students in regard to which activities they like and the sort of texts selected.

3. Time can always be found to discuss the value of a particular strategy or activity.

4. A two hour weekly session is completely inadequate so a great deal of time is spent in making sure the student can practice what has been done in class independently and with a minimum of frustration at home.

First cycle of lessons

Session One

Activity: Class constructed two sentences about coming to class. (group language experience)

> I go to Footscray College of TAFE on Thursday.
>
> The College is on the corner of Nicholson St and Buckley St.

We read through the sentences several times. (Sentences were taped during the session for each student to take home.) The sentences were copied down.

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We talked about the important words — I go

Footscray
College of TAFE
Thursday
Nicholson St
Buckley St

Activity: copying bottom up

We showed students a good way of copying words

sample:

eg Footscray (at the top of the page)

Footscray

Go down the number of times you want to copy (six times is enough). Start copying from the bottom so that you can always see the good model and don't copy any mistakes. Always say the word in your mouth as you write it. (Informal discussion about memory. Your brain has all different sorts of memory - movement, hearing, visual, etc and things are more easily remembered if they are linked.)

Activity: matching exercises

We provided two columns of words and asked students to match them

sample:

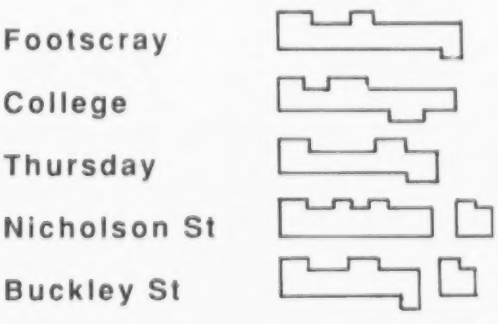
Footscray	Nicholson St
College	Footscray
Thursday	Buckley St
Nicholson St	Thursday
Buckley St	College

Activity: word shapes

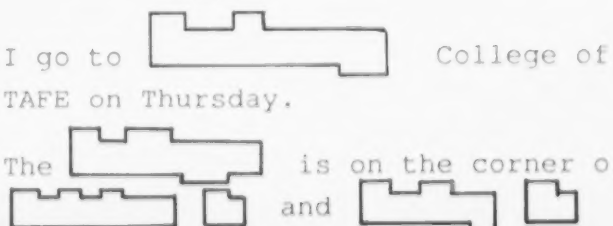
We spent some time looking at the different word shapes of words from our sentences

sample:

- repeated the earlier matching exercise but with shapes in one column



- repeated the sentences with gaps in word shapes to be completed



(These activities took about an hour and were followed by a 15 minute break.)

Activity: matching exercise

Following the break we handed round a picture of the College showing the entrance to our building, a map of Footscray, and an enrolment form. The handbook and the Melways were on hand as well as copies for each student. Students were asked to locate words they knew from these documents. During this activity an interesting discussion arose that led to a future lesson. There are two well known streets in downtown Footscray that share a common shape: Barkley St and Buckley St.

The remainder of the session was spent in setting up practice sessions for students to do each day at home:

listening to the tape daily

reading along with it

pointing to each word (tracking)

copying the sentences daily

bottom up copying of isolated words (mouthing as you copy)

'find-a-word' including only top to bottom and left to right words from the sentences. [see page 33, for a brief discussion about the 'find-a-word' activity]

Session Two

Activity: review of the first session

We read the sentences together and alone, completed the 'find-a-word' in pairs (whoever they happened to be seated next to) and completed a cloze exercise on the sentences (Some continued to work together. Dennis and Lindsay prefer working alone.).

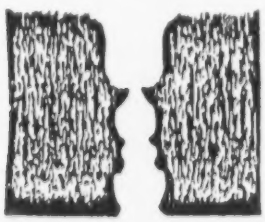
The students requested a recalling of the key words. (All were successful in writing some words correctly.) Jan got them all right and was very pleased. Rose got flustered and completed only a few. Krystina tried three successfully. Wendy who was wearing her glasses for the first time got none correct but got all initial sounds and word shapes. She noticed the difference between Buckley St and Barkly St for the first time.

Coffee Break

Activity: exercise demonstrating visual memory

This activity arose from the confusion between Barkley St and Buckley St during the previous week. One student who had not read before was able to notice the internal difference in the words for the first time.

We handed round the following diagrams for discussion:



Can you see two profiles?
Or is it a vase?

Look at this person. Do you see an old lady
or a young lady? Try to see both. So What!

These questions were used as prompts: what can you see? vase? candlesticks? profiles?

The students generally could see one thing. Together they worked out ways of showing each other the picture that couldn't be focussed on (eg. turn the page, look away, outline the drawing in highlight, etc). They then looked at diagram 2 – the young lady/old lady. They recognised that a strategy that worked for one person did not always work for others. There was no one correct way of learning. They discovered even after everyone could see both pictures that the first picture they saw they continued to see first and most easily. From this we showed the link between word recognition as a foundation for them being able to write the word (spelling) and the value of some of the activities we were setting up for them. (This discussion took over an hour and was crucial in the development of the whole group's understanding and commitment to both undertaking activities in class but also to daily routines at home.)

After this cycle of lessons Dana and I met after class and went through each individual's progress so far. We looked over their original interview notes, and documented the progress they had made. We noted areas that needed further development and designed activities that would do this. For example, students clearly needed and requested some more work on letters and letter formation. The individual assessments were discussed and amended with each student in the next week.

The second cycle of lessons

The second series of sessions to be described here was related more directly to the teaching of reading and established a routine in which students could successfully repeat and practise what they were learning. The routine was seen as particularly important because class time was so limited, students desired a great deal of repetition and reinforcement and it stressed ideas about learning to read that we felt were important. The same text is usually used over at least a three week period. Our evaluation and planning sessions as teachers started fitting in with this pattern of text selection following feedback from the students and informal discussion on how they were going.

Selection of reading material

Material is selected by the teachers with the following criteria in mind:

- It is always a whole text, never an excerpt
- We always attempt to give students the real thing or a copy as close to the original in appearance
- We try to avoid simplified material (not always possible)
- We have selected material that we feel is relevant to the group as a whole not just in terms of interest but in terms of familiarity and adult requirements
- The length of text should not exceed about 10-15 minutes (read aloud).

All these criteria are necessary if new readers are to learn how to integrate all the cueing systems people use when they read. [refer to material guidelines in ALIO Broadsheet – see Reading List]

Students need to see the text in its full context to gain an understanding that there are many forms of writing, that writing occurs in particular contexts and that each form has its own conventions. Without the whole text you remove some of the clues and take away the need to bring outside knowledge to bear on its meaning. Students will hopefully gain the confidence to deal with texts as they come up not on whether they look easy. If the pieces are simplified they should at least retain the features of the genre from which they come.

From the whole text we then move to using the particular text to extend graphophonic knowledge by demonstrating patterns of words and common letter combinations. The introduction of these whole texts is equally important for forming the initial models for their writing which for this group will be in the Basic English group. Speed copying [see page 79] and some joint summary writing is the only writing the group attempt.

A whole range of 'genres' (writing forms) which we have felt relevant to adults or been requested by the group has been looked at over the year. For example, language-experience stories, narratives, recipes, a newspaper article incorporating graphs and list, forms, electoral material, time-

Session One

Selected text: AUSSIE IMAGE from News Review *(Reduced from A3)* [See Reading List]

NEWS REVIEW

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 4 JUNE 1988

ISSN 0810 – 7202

THE AUSSIE IMAGE

In our bicentennial year it is natural for us to think about what makes us Australian. Our country is large and our people come from many countries, so that is not an easy thing to do.

What makes us different? Are we, as some people say, true-blue ockers, sports lovers with bronzed skins who love the outback? Is there such a thing as a typical Australian? If there is, what is it?

An advertising firm set out to answer these questions. The survey was called "True Who". Two thousand people from all over Australia took part in the survey.

The results showed that most Australians don't think of themselves as ockers. Only 15 out of every 100 call themselves "true-blue" Aussies.

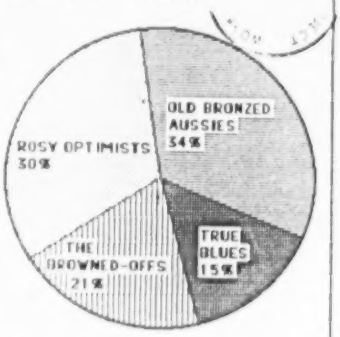
Some say Paul Hogan has made the 'ocker' image popular.

One image of Australians is that we live in the outback. In fact 85% of us live in the big cities on the coast. Seven out of ten Aussies live in twelve cities. Between 60% and 70% of us were either born overseas, or our parents were.

The survey showed that Australians tend to dislike people who are arrogant, selfish, loudmouthed, shallow or lazy. Australians want to be seen as more sophisticated. That is why they dislike the 'ocker' image. However, most people said they like Paul Hogan! This may be because he has proven to be a successful business man. Men like Alan Bond, John Elliott and Robert Holmes a'Court are also admired for their success. They have become household names and symbols of Australian life.

Are you proud to be Australian? The survey showed that 85% are. It also showed that 89% think we should learn more about our own country.

The survey found that there are four broad types of Australians. They are the "True Blues", the "Old Bronzed Aussies", the "Rosy Optimists" and "The Browned-Offs". This diagram shows the percentage in each group.



The "True-Blues" are:-
- 15% of the population
- younger (average age 39)
- from country areas
- Labor supporters
- believers in Australia as "The Lucky Country"

The "Old Bronzed Aussies" are:-
- 34% of the population
- older (average age 50)
- retired
- Liberal/National Party supporters
- old-fashioned in values

The "Browned-Off Aussies" are:-
- 21% of the population
- born overseas, or their parents were
- city dwellers
- least proud to be Australian
- not sure Australia has an identity

The "Rosy Optimists" are:-
- 30% of the population
- younger (average age 37)
- city dwellers
- fully employed
- Labor supporters or Democrats
- believers in the future of Aust.

To sum up, the survey said that our image has never been realistic, but the image of the 1980's is that we are a more sophisticated country where tastes in food, clothes and culture are gathered from many parts of the world.

THE SWAGMAN

One image of Australia from years gone by is the Swaggie.
Swagmen were quite common in Australia from the 1840's onwards. They were workers who carried their swags from one station to the next looking for work.

From 1890-93, a large number of swaggies were on the track. During the depression years of the 1930's, swaggie numbers grew again. When jobs in the cities were hard to get, men had to look for work in the country. These men had a hard life. They slept in woolsheds and railway yards, or even out in the open. When World War II began, many of them joined the Army.

Australian folklore is rich in stories, poems and songs about men on the track.

THE SWAG

In the old days, a swagman carried a swag rather than a suitcase. It held everything he owned. It was his 'home' - slung across his back, on a horse, a camel or a bicycle.

The swag was a sausage-shaped bed roll. It usually consisted of two blankets and a waterproof covering. The swaggie's personal belongings were rolled up inside. Other names for a swag were bluey, drum, curse or shiralee.

"HUMPING THE DRUM" is a swaggie's poem.
I humped my drum from Kingdom Come,
To the back of the Milky Way.
I boiled my quart on the Cape of York,
And I starved last Christmas Day.

SMOKES AND TEA

Most swaggies smoked a pipe. When not in use, the pipe was often tucked into the belt or hat band.

Some swagmen filled their pipes with tea leaves or dry gum leaves if they ran out of tobacco. Most would rather go without food than tobacco. Billy tea was another favourite of the swagmen. Here is a poem about it.

You may talk of whisky or talk of your beer,
I've something far better awaiting me here,
It stands on that fire beneath the gum-tree,
And you cannot much lick it - a billy of tea.

ADELAIDE COLLEGE OF TAFE IS A MAJOR SPONSOR OF "NEWS REVIEW"

This text was chosen because of the interest generated by the bicentennial celebrations. It was typical of many newspaper articles because it had lists, graphs, photos and captions and column layout. Its drawback was that it was a simplified text. All students were given a copy of the newspaper and had some time to look through it. Some discussion about the whole paper took place, mostly generated by the photos of people they recognised. We started making guesses about what

Activity: first reading whole text

The class was asked to ***listen*** and follow if they could or wanted to. The teacher read at normal speed with some exaggerated pausing at the end of paragraphs. We discussed who Alan Bond was, the issue of stereotypes and words like 'optimist'.

second reading of whole text

The class was asked to ***follow or track*** the text with their finger, pen or ruler. We read a little more slowly and with frequent pauses and descriptions of where we were eg. 1st column, 2nd paragraph. These were demonstrated. Students needed a great deal of concentration. Many had not made this connection between the word they heard with the printed word before and found this very demanding.

Coffee Break

Involved a walk to a nearby kitchen, a necessary change of scene.

Activity: word study

Students and teachers selected some words from the text for further attention and a range of activities was generated from them in this case on the spot. One teacher prepared word building, and the cloze exercise and find a word for homework while the other worked with the class. Close and immediate access to photocopier is mandatory. These words were selected because of their importance in the text. Some students added words for their own individual lists and some dealt with smaller numbers of words (eg. Krystina concentrated on one, Danny selected his own words). The students copied these words into their books (some also had them put on tape).

Words selected in this session were:

Australia
country
Bicentennial
show

Activity: re reading of the text aloud by teacher leaving out those words as we come to them (Oral Cloze)

There is an excellent description on how to do this in a book called *Helping Children Read* [see Reading List]

Activity: word search in the text

Students were asked to find the words *Australia, Australian* as many times and as fast as they could. This develops quick eye movements across the page. Good readers can locate words from the middle of the text. The exercise can be to locate items for meaning at a later stage. It takes the emphasis off word for word reading.

The last half hour was spent giving each member of the class a tape of the text (one of the teachers is involved in updating tapes and putting additional information on it for individual students) and explaining work to be done at home.

There is a daily routine asked of each student:

- listening and reading along with the tape at least once daily
- 20 minutes daily to ***copy*** text (see Speed Copying below)
- we provide a find-a-word with words taken from the text
- students are encouraged to copy words they are learning
- copying is done bottom up [see above, page 74]
- practice spelling call out from their tape.

Students are encouraged to take more than one copy of activity handouts so that they can do them again at home and check on earlier copies. Cloze and find-a-word activities are always prepared whether used in class or not. Material found by students is willingly taped for them and others interested. The whole *News Review* was taped so they could read on by themselves.

Activity: 20 minute copying of text

We practised the copying homework. This gives the teacher an indication of what each student

and later on phrases or clusters. Some assistance given here on letter formation/letter names. Those students who were not spacing between words were picked up here for some individual attention.

Note on Speed Copying for beginner adult readers and writers

This activity has been developed from one used with adults in the College's Return to Study Course. [see Reading List]

The text selected for the class is usually long enough so that it is not able to be copied fully by students within a 20 minute period. The text has also been chosen because it is a good model of a particular form or genre of writing. The student should be able to read the text or be familiar with its content (can be listened to a number of times before copying is attempted). Students are asked to set aside 20 minutes of uninterrupted time daily. They copy the text from the beginning each time and cease after 20 minutes writing. They are asked to keep continuously writing stressing that this is not a handwriting exercise.

Each time they copy the length of their copy should be increasing. As they become familiar with the text they copy more and more from memory. Beginning students copy letter by letter to begin with. They pick up speed by holding more in their memory and copying either whole words or chunks of word usually letter patterns of high frequency. They then start to pick up frequently used words such as common and structural words and copy them directly and finally they start clustering words and phrases. The more they read, memorise and copy the faster they get. Improvement in reading shows up in the length of copy. Speed and length can also be increased by some handwriting instruction and even a cursive script.

Benefits of speed copying for beginner students

Students who have been uncomfortable with 'sitting down work' and with physically writing for any period of time gradually become more accustomed to it and less restless. It is an activity that all students can do at home without assistance. (They might need a timer). It provides a daily routine that is a good foundation for study habits in the future. It can be measured. Students become familiar with the language structures of particular genres. They automatically pick up on spelling particularly the hard to teach common words. It encourages the chunking and clustering of words for meaning.

Session Two

Discussion and look at home activities

Students reported on the poor quality dubbing of the tape, some tapes to be done again. We must check on length of speed copying.

Activity: read text aloud with tracking

Read text aloud, students asked to join in (Jan, Pat and Rose read fairly continuously, Dennis and Danny from time to time, and Krystina chimed in on particular words she recognised, Wendy and Lindsay tracking only).

Discussion followed about which parts were the easiest to read and why. It was obvious in the reading that the listing of the survey responses in the article were harder to predict. Lists didn't have the connecting words. Sometimes we put in the connecting words to make it make sense to us. We read them again using the introductory statement for each item, eg.

The True Blues are 15% of the population
The True Blues are younger
The True Blues are from country areas.

The students read these more easily and understood the lists better.

Activity: a class survey similar to AUSSIE IMAGE with findings presented in a pie graph

This involved discussion of each type and interpretation of the text. All the class saw themselves as 'Rosy Optimists' so there was little progress on the pie graph, however, we then looked at the composition of the class, eg. age and place of birth, and with rereadings of the list people worked out where they belonged according to the survey. This activity didn't go as planned but ended up being very productive in teasing out the content of the text much better. The class asserted humourously that they were 'sophisticated' Australians within the context of the article. They were obviously picking up a concept of stereotyping! (The teachers made a note to use this type of material again).

These discussions followed us to Coffee Break.

Activity: Cloze

Using a photocopy of the original article those particular words chosen last session were removed and replaced with a line. Students were encouraged to work in pairs to read and make predictions together. Some used their other copy to simply locate the missing words and then copy. Teachers attempted to get round to read with students and check back that selected words made sense. The women eagerly worked together while most of the men in the group did the exercise alone but then conferred.

Activity: Speed Copying of text (20 minutes)

Activity: spelling test (requested by students)

Teachers maintain a list of all the words highlighted during sessions from the beginning of the year. Each session one of the staff does a call out. Students write those words they've been working on or they want to have a go at. The call out is fast. Students look over words and note where they think they are correct. They then check back on their lists or ask for teacher corrections. Checking is done visually from models not aurally.

Session Three

Comments were made on work done at home and a review of previous work. (All students except the two younger members are very committed to doing as much at home as possible. Some work at night, others in the morning. Danny talks about his routine of one hour study one hour jogging. There is growing criticism of the two Pre-vocational trainees by the rest of the group because they don't do anything outside class and they see them as wasting their opportunities. Sharon's behaviour, physically leaning on Mark and only talking to him, is becoming a distraction and distasteful to Mark. As they always arrive a little late the teachers decided to sit round the table to influence the seating arrangements. Sharon willingly adopts a helpful role with Krystina).

Activity: two readings of the text

Most students joined in. All were reading through the lists with much more ease.

Activity: build up some word families from words selected in first session

It was apparent from the cloze homework that students were getting the right word but not always the right form so we moved to show something of roots and word building on the chalkboard eg. Australia, Australian, Australians, Aussie, Aussies; show, shows, showed, shown; Bicentennial, percent, percentage, %.

Coffee Break

Activity: class summary of article

The teacher provided an outline summary and students filled in details. sample: The 'Aussie Image' article in the *News Review* was about a s . . . that showed what A . . . . . think about themselves.

Most of the words used had been part of the earlier word studies. Both Jan and Pat did their own summaries and assisted those beside them. Rose and Wendy were working well together and providing a lead orally with the rest of the group.

Post script

These sessions came from the earlier part of the first semester so that by the end of the year there had been some dramatic changes both in the students themselves and for the group.

An evaluation process was undertaken at the end of the semester and recommendations were made to students about what course to undertake in the second semester. Pat and Jan went on to the Basic English group to concentrate more on their writing; Mark and Sharon's course finished (Sharon did go on to a community literacy group, Mark would easily have coped with Basic English group), Wendy left to get a job and took on a night class; Rose started well at the beginning of the semester but suffered another breakdown and missed most sessions; Alfred's attendance became more spasmodic because of flaring up of his injury.

Rex Ennis – EXPERIENCE AND LANGUAGE: TOWARDS A BALANCED DIET

BACKGROUND/SETTING

The group in this account was made up of workers from a Sheltered Employment facility in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. The class took place over a three hour period on a weekday morning. Workers were given work release time to allow for attendance and travel to and from the class. The workplace was committed to educational provision for its employees and this class was the third in a series of 30-40 week classes usually with different students each year. The class took place in teaching space (with a kitchen nearby) in the Compensatory Education Department of the local TAFE College.

ESTABLISHING THE CLASS

The process of establishing the class included personal interviews with applicants at which time the following details were recorded on a five page interview form:

Name	Address	Date of birth
Country of origin	Language other than English	Work details: Duties
Hours of work	Future Intentions	Education: School
Adult Education	Why interested in classes?	What learning required?
Time availability	General Needs and Skills:	Communication
Physical/Medical	Transport Independence	Reading
Writing	Money Skills	Number Skills
Telling Time	Leisure activities	

Writing samples if appropriate (including copying)

On the basis of the interviews a proposed class list was drawn up in order to create a group which represented:

- a wide range of abilities and needs
- compatibility and balance in respect to needs and abilities
- the potential for pairing and sub-grouping within the group to allow co-operation, some peer tutoring, peer support and modelling and the encouragement of the principles of self advocacy. [see *Umbrella, Reading List*, page 89]
- priorities in respect to need, especially where the need for independent living skills was most immediate and where the possibility of the person moving on to other community-based and College-based provision existed

In addition the composition of the group was influenced by the tutors' notion of their own strengths and limitations in respect to working with the group productively (could they, 'get the group to work?')

BEGINNING THE CLASS

Once the group had been decided upon it was possible to determine a provisional set of aims and objectives based on individual needs, group needs and the physical environment.

They included: social skills
transport training
written and spoken language
numeracy
other life skills related to the above.

The decisions about the composition of the group and the direction it would take in respect to aims and objectives were influenced also by the fact that the class was to be taught by two tutors working as a team. The pair had worked together with a similar group during the previous year.

The group comprised 10 students and it was intended that flexible grouping and re-grouping would occur to allow a variety of activities including as much direct, first-hand experience as possible as well as individual work when appropriate.

In the weeks preceding this particular session the class had been involved in activities and experiences which included:

- noting and recording and discussing time and the passage of time including estimation of time.
- examining, completing and designing a variety of forms to record personal likes, dislikes, habits, timing of events, travel details etc.
- travel between workplace and the College using alternative routes, arranging meeting places and times, noting times and costs, purchasing tickets and handling the necessary money, referring to appropriate maps and timetables etc.
- reading and share/reading a number of class books produced by previous classes, and other reading material.
- visiting a number of cafeterias and restaurants for morning tea and purchasing lunches to take away.
- finding and deciding upon appropriate recipes to suit the group in order to buy ingredients, prepare food and present lunch at the end of some sessions.
- budgeting for the collection of money to pay for the ingredients for cooking and later banking the surplus in a group bank account which was the beginning of a sort of 'mini-business' where deposit and withdrawal from the account happened regularly.

LEAD UP TO THE LESSON

In the previous week (about the sixth in the history of the class) the session plan had taken this general form:

ACTIVITY ONE: Settling in.
Recapitulation of last week.
Plans for this week.

ACTIVITY TWO: Looking at, talking about and reading in unison from past class book.

ACTIVITY THREE:

NON COOKING GROUP	COOKING GROUP
1. Re-cap on shopping, cooking eating from last week.	1. Collecting lunch money.
2. Build chalkboard experience story on above including budget details.	2. Making shopping list.
3. Copying group account or writing individually.	3. Visiting shopping centre.
4. Reading together a Self Advocacy story from "Umbrella" [see Reading List]	4. Preparing food to recipe for sausage rolls (incl. vegetarian variety) and cooking sweet corn.

5. Checking calculator skills while double checking budget figures from previous week.

5. Serving lunch to class.

6. Cleaning up after the meal.

ACTIVITY FOUR Planning future activities of the class while eating lunch together.

ACTIVITY FIVE Talking about television programs and introducing use of TV guides for program selection and times.

THIS SESSION

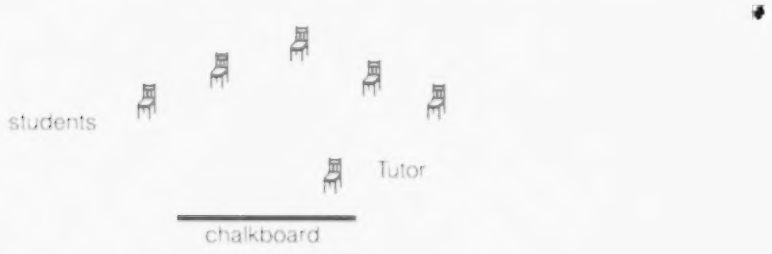
The format of this session was similar to the previous one (above). Some of the class activities differed while others were a development of ones started the previous week (eg. reading of previous night's TV program guide while discussing what had been watched, then closer reading of the coming night's programs to consider times and options, including not watching TV). The Cooking Group for the previous week, comprising five students and one tutor, recorded the experience of presenting the lunch of sausage rolls and sweet corn.

THIS ACTIVITY

RECOUNTING AND RECORDING THE EXPERIENCE OF PREPARING LUNCH FOR THE WHOLE GROUP IN ORDER TO SHARE THE EXPERIENCE WITH THE REST OF THE CLASS IMMEDIATELY AND WITH OTHERS LATER BY CONTRIBUTING TO THE CLASS BOOK.

HOW IT HAPPENED

1. The ***physical arrangements/seating*** were completed with the five students seated in a semi-circle around a chalk-board and the tutor also seated in a central position to lead the discussion and record the experiences. Thus:



2. ***Resources required*** were: chairs, chalkboard, multi-coloured chalk, duster, paper, pens and pencils.

3. The tutor explained that the group would make a record of the previous week's cooking experience in order to share the experience with the rest of the class and to contribute to a class book.

4. The tutor asked the group to recall the events of the previous week. Questions were posed to elicit the following information:

- the sequence of events
- the materials used
- who did what (task allocation)
- highlights and/or problems
- reactions of individuals to the experience including reactions of the Non-Cooking Group to the lunch.

Questions to encourage recall of the sequence of events and details and the contribution and reactions of each member of the group included:

'What was the first thing we did?'

'What happened next?'

'Who went shopping?'

'How did you get on with the shopping?'

'And then what did we do next?'

'Who helped Tricia to separate the pastry?'

'What did you do after that Doug?'

'What were you doing, Katrina, while Steve and Antony were mixing the filling?'

'What part did you like best?'

'Did the others enjoy the meal?'

'Did you enjoy the meal? Why?'

'Do you still like sausage rolls?'

5. The tutor helped the students decide how to record these memories: what do we want to record? How will we do it?

6. The tutor began by recording, on the side of the chalkboard, some of the direct quotes given during the recall phase. [see no.4 above]

'We couldn't find the right kind of pastry at Coles.' 'I liked taking the leaves off the corn. I've never done that before. It was fun.'

'I stabbed the sausage rolls with a fork and killed them.' (Laughter not recorded).

Before each of these was written down the tutor encouraged the contributing student to re-iterate what had been said thus:

'What was that again?'

'Say it again, please, so I can get it straight.' 'Did you hear what Katrina said Doug?'

[It is important to record the direct language of the students, the exact words in order to capture natural language patterns. It is 'Talk written down'. Careful thought must be given to the similarities and differences between oral language and written language. Different written genres use different language (rarely following oral language patterns). Familiarity with written language from those genres needs to be established alongside Language- Experience work utilizing oral language patterns. Language-Experience work can be used to help students produce writing for a whole range of purposes.

When taking dictation from students, tutors have to decide when or whether to accept non-standard forms. Any tutor changes to a student's contribution means it may no longer be sensible to the student, no longer the student's property. This is more of an issue with individual Language-Experience work. In a group, discussion about word choice, syntax, etc is a valuable activity in itself.]

The tutor read each quote progressively while writing it, conferring along the way with the speaker that it was an accurate writing of what had been said. At the same time (in a sort of 'running commentary') the tutor pointed out some of the conventions of writing:

'Do you notice I'm using a capital letter for Coles?' 'And I'll put a full stop here before I start the next sentence.' 'I'll have to write the word 'stabbed' on the next line.'

7. When some individual quotes had been recorded a start was made on the group account. The tutor asked, 'How will we start?' 'What do you think we should say first?' Various suggestions were made and discussed until it was agreed to start with: 'Last week we cooked sausage rolls and corn for lunch.' This was repeated by the tutor and by group members and then written on the board by the tutor with the group saying the words as they were written. Again questions were asked by the tutor such as, 'What word do I write next?' 'Have I written it correctly so far?' then, 'Let's read it over together to make sure I've got it right.' As the group read in unison the tutor pointed to each word. Then, 'That's a good beginning sentence. What will we write next?'

8. This process was followed until a first draft was completed. Some changes had been made during the re-readings, of the individual sentences. The changes improved or altered meaning and allowed for correction or closer approximation to accepted written conventions, a sort of translation from oral to written form.

9. The tutor now read the whole passage and asked, 'Does that all sound okay? Is there anything we should change? Is there anything you think we should add?'

10. Some word changes were made at this point and a discussion ensued about the overall structure of the piece. (In this activity there was a great deal of negotiating, discussing and shared decision-making: all important processes in groups). It was agreed not to use a time/sequential structure but to organise a structure which provided:

1) an introductory statement

'Last week we cooked sausage rolls and corn for lunch. We started by going shopping to buy pastry and sausage meat and tomato sauce.'

2) a sentence saying what each person did:

'Tricia mixed the sausage meat with the onion and grated carrot.'
'Steve grated the carrot and washed up some of the plates.'
'Doug stabbed the sausage rolls with a fork.' etc.,

3) a concluding statement

'The sausage rolls tasted good. Frank took too much tomato sauce. Dora asked if there was Ratsak in them so Steve said, "Take a bite and find out."' (again laughter not recorded)

11. The tutor now read the piece over in the agreed order and the group confirmed that it was what they wanted to say. The 'confirming with the group' step here was an affirmation of group ownership of the account, a process again of shared decision-making.

12. The tutor then wrote the whole account beside the first draft but now in correct order, confirming with the group that it was being done correctly, pointing out more of the conventions of writing and inviting the group to read and re-read the piece as it was progressively written.

(The procedure described above, Steps 3-12, provided a modelling in a group situation of 'Process Writing'. [see Reading List])

13. The completed account was now read and re-read a number of times using the following procedures, mostly variations of Readalong or Oral Cloze [see Reading List]:

a) the group read in unison with the tutor pointing word by word,

b) the group read in unison with individual students pointing word by word,

c) the tutor read, stopping periodically for the group to provide the next word before continuing,

d) the tutor read, stopping for an individual student to supply the next word (or phrase) before continuing,

e) students volunteered to read individually and in pairs (also stopping if they wished for the tutor or other students to supply the next word before continuing),

f) the group read the introductory and concluding statements and each individual read (some in unison with the tutor) the sentence relating to her/his contribution.

14. The tutor now asked the students to copy all or part of the chalk-board account onto their own paper (according to facility with copying).

15. While the copying was being completed the tutor worked with individual students, reading and re-reading all or parts of the passage.

16. For two of the students the tutor made learning cards (thick card, approximately 200mm x 40mm) on which were written the particular sentences relating to that student:

Steve grated the carrot and washed up some of the plates.

with one key word or phrase chosen by the student on the other side thus:

grated the carrot

These cards were added to the students' accumulating collection of similar learning cards which were used at home and in class. The opportunity for individual work like this needs to be created. The individual experience contributed to the group production but was then able to be isolated for intensive use of the original author. A group language-experience story, became an individual language-experience sentence and caption.

AFTER THE ACTIVITY

Later, as a whole class activity, the following occurred:

1. Photocopied versions of the sausage rolls, and sweet corn passage were handed to each person in the larger group.

2. The authors read the passage to the rest of the class then invited them to readalong with them on a re-reading.

3. Several re-readings took place including individual readings of specific sentences, unison reading of parts, etc.

4. A general discussion on the event (the lunch) and the recording of the event (the passage) took place with quite direct feedback given to the authors, 'You shouldn't have mentioned the Ratsak.' 'You read well Tricia.' 'I liked the bit about Doug stabbing the sausage rolls.' This response engenders self esteem, confidence and esprit de corps.

5. On several occasions in later weeks the piece was again read and re-read.

6. The tutor filed a copy of the piece for inclusion in the end of class book which was later sold as part of their 'mini-business'.

LATER ON STILL

This type of activity was repeated regularly both with these students and with the rest of the larger group. The stimulus was not always meal preparation. On one occasion the group visited the Victoria Museum, on another the Old Melbourne Goal. Both of these events lead to the production of books made up of group accounts of the trips together with individual accounts. Some were produced through a 'Process Writing' approach, others through individual Language-Experience work and others through the combination of the two. The books also included students' photographs some of which were accompanied by captions. Other photographs demanded more extended writing.

These books became part of their regular reading material and were used by other groups. They were sold by the students and the proceeds were later counted and recounted, recorded and banked as part of the group's 'mini business' operation. Thus the mixture of experience and knowledge of the activities was taken by the students into other parts of their lives: an enriched and varied diet will lead to further growth.

Chapter 5
FURTHER READING

The material referred to in the following list provides sufficient additional information to help readers follow ideas from some of the chapters. It should also help in locating this material. They are listed alphabetically by author.

Literacy Broadsheet 24

Adult Literacy Information Office, Sydney. October, 1988.

p6 'Criteria for Selecting Adult Literacy Materials' Useful guidelines for selecting material for use with adult literacy students : reinforcing a preference for whole text.

News Review

Adult Literacy Unit, Adelaide College of TAFE, 20 Light Square, Adelaide.

News Review is published 8 times a year from November to November at a subscription rate of $6.40 for one copy with reductions for multiple copies. It follows a standard newspaper layout with lead article and features such as World News, Australian News, Lifestyle, Sport and Entertainment.

Spell by Writing

Wendy Bean and Chrystine Bouffler

Primary English Teaching Association, Rozelle, NSW, 1987

Deals with aspects of language development particularly as they relate to learning to spell in the context of writing. Hence Chapter headings like: Composing; the Reading/Writing Connection; Editing; Proofreading and Spelling; Assessment and Reporting.

'Genre-Based Writing: an Introduction'

Stephen Black

Occasional Paper No.8, Adult Literacy Information Office, NSW, June, 1988.

In addition to defining 'genre' and quoting examples from Finch (see below) the paper discusses the tensions and issues in the process writing-genre debate.

'Writing as a Social Process: Using Genre-based writing in Adult Literacy'

Jill Finch

Literacy Exchange, NSW Adult Literacy Council, November, 1987, p.33-38.

An introductory article which explains the term 'genre' and provides examples of some common genres and applies the ideas to adult literacy work.

Notes from the Battlefield: Towards a Theory of Why People Write

Mem Fox

Paper presented at 5th Invitation Riverina Literacy Centre Conference, August, 1987.

The author explores why she and others write: to get a real reaction, because they 'ache with care'. It is an anecdotal highly relevant, very personal, funny, valuable piece of writing for teachers who would have their students write.

Opportunity to do Brilliantly

Audrey N. Grant

Commonwealth Department of Education, AGPS, Canberra, 1987

Report of an action research project involving two adult literacy programs: CAE morning program, 1984 and Northern Districts Adult Literacy Group, Glenroy program. Interviews with paid and volunteer tutors, students and co-ordinators provide the raw material from which recommendations are made concerning evaluation and research, flexibility of structures, program support and devolution of responsibility, staff recruitment, training and development, research priorities and priority areas for funding.

Reading Strategies: Focus on Comprehension

Yetta M. Goodman and Carolyn Burke

Holt, Rinehart and Winston (NY, USA) p.32-34

For arguments for and against the re-writing/simplification of texts in literacy learning and a listing of criteria for selecting materials.

The Foundations of Literacy

Don Holdaway

Ashton Scholastic, Sydney, 1979

Holdaway draws together the ideas of leading researchers on early literacy development, presenting them in a clear, simplified and often applied manner. Refers specifically to early literacy development in children. Readily available. A basic text.

'Visualisation Spelling Technique' or 'Spelling the Right Way'

Carol McCormack,

ACAL Conference Papers, Footscray TAFE College, 1984

The paper refers particularly to the rapid call-out technique.

'Speed Copying'

Rob McCormack, Footscray College of TAFE.

This paper on 'Speed Copying' is part of the material produced by the Footscray 'Return to Study' staff.

Michael's Challenge: Overcoming Illiteracy

Michael Marquet

Caxton Press, Christchurch, NZ, 1988

Michael Marquet's very personal story of his experience (in his family, in school and in later life) struggling towards literacy. Though documenting thoroughly Michael's experiences, his account speaks for thousands of others.

Steps in Literacy

Gail Moraro and Philip McIntyre

Adult Migrant Education Education Service, Ministry of Education, Melbourne, April, 1988.

A handbook for teachers of long term residents with high oracy and low literacy skills in English.

'Teaching Genre and Teaching Writing'

Peter Medway

in English in Australia, No. 85, September 1988, p.72-80.

A review of **The Place of Genre in Writing: Current Debates** in which the author summarises and discusses the arguments of the contributors, including his own reservations about the 'genre approach'.

Umbrella

Magazine of the National Self Advocacy Kit Project

123 Sydney Road, Brunswick, 3056

Umbrella: "There is a need for self advocacy groups to get to know each other, to learn from each other and to support each other. This magazine aims to be part of that process". Useful resource for disabled people and those who work with them. The issue used with the group was Summer 1987-8.

Tutoring Adults

Michael Newman

Council of Adult Education, Melbourne, 1986

This is a series of practical booklets with these titles:

Thinking about Teaching Adults
Adults as Learners
Helping Adults Learn
Planning a Course
Running a Class Session
Evaluation

It is an excellent, thorough and practical introduction to working with adults in groups.

*****So You Want to Teach an Adult to Read***

Pam Osmond

Edward Carroll, Melbourne, 1984

Designed as a handbook for adult literacy tutors, this book includes explanations of student activities including 'Experience Stories', 'Just Reading' – various forms, 'Cloze' and 'Comprehension of Connected Prose'.

Helping Children Read

(publication from Reading Treatment Centre, Carlton)

An excellent outline of strategies like Readalong, Cloze, etc. This publication is no longer in print.

OTHER USEFUL PUBLICATIONS THAT OUTLINE THESE TEACHING/LEARNING ACTIVITIES ARE INDICATED IN THIS READING LIST BY A DOUBLE ASTERISK.

The Place of Genre in Learning: Current Debates

Ian Reid (editor)

Deakin University, Centre for Studies in Literacy Education : Typereader Publications No. 1, 1987

As the title indicates: proponents of the 'genre approach' explain and defend their ideas against arguments from critics of the approach. Some 'middle ground' viewpoints are put forward.

*****Some Strategies and Techniques for Reading Instruction***

adapted by Barbara Scott, Adult Literacy Unit, SA, Department of Further Education, Adelaide, 1982

These 16 large cards include excellent advice and ideas for working with adult literacy students. They appeared earlier in the Riverina Tutor Training Kit, by Mark Brennan, Wagga Wagga, no date.

Psycholinguistics and Reading

Frank Smith, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, NY, USA, 1973.

Understanding Reading

Frank Smith, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, NY, USA, 1971.

Writing and the Reader

Frank Smith, Heinemann Educational Books, 1982.

Three of the early Frank Smith books referred to by a number of contributors to 'A Life of Its Own'.

'Joining the Literacy Club'

essay by Frank Smith in
'Joining the Literacy Club – Further Essays into Education' by Frank Smith

Heinemann Educational Books, 1988.

Frank Smith sees self perception as a literate being as an essential part of the becoming literate process: the social nature of learning. See also pp 132-137 "Postscripts" for Smith's discussion on Evaluation.

'Workers Write – A Process'

Robiny Stricker

in **Fine Print,** Victorian Adult Literacy Council, Feb-March, 1986, p3-6.

This article explains what one tutor understands by 'process-writing' and shows how it was applied in a Workplace class at Williamstown Naval Dockyards.

*****Resource Kit for Distance Adult Literacy Tutors***

Peter Waterhouse, Barbara Mildenhall, Robin Sefton, Yallourn College of TAFE, 1987

This Kit was produced for adult literacy tutor training by tele-conferencing. It is an excellent tutor reference in its own right. Reading No. 4 (p.131-144) explains how and why to do:

Language-Experience
Readalong and
Cloze Technique.

Readings No.9 and 10 are about aspects of writing and teaching writing, including 'process-writing.'

THE PEOPLE WHO WROTE THIS BOOK

DEBORAH DAVISON

Deborah has extensive experience as an educator in a wide range of situations – schools, prisons, youth clubs, health centres and in industry. She has worked with migrant factory workers, women's groups, teachers and parents, health workers, employers, unions, young people on the street and her teenage daughter!

Deborah has worked as a Youth Worker, a tutor with the Youth Work Course at Philip Institute, with the Family Planning Association of Victoria and as Statewide Liaison Officer with the Community Education Unit of the Victorian Education Department.

Four years ago Adult Literacy and Basic Education was a new field for Deborah who is now one of the Co-ordinators of the Workplace Basic Education Project.

Although work is extremely important Deborah also needs plants, and soil, a bike in the park, somewhere to swim, a good book and bed - usually in that order.

KAYE ELIAS

Kaye has been a sessional tutor with the Workplace Basic Education Department and the Access Department at CAE in literacy, basic education and numeracy for three years.

She has found the work with workers in their workplace setting particularly interesting because it gives workers the opportunity in work time to take up their rights to a basic education.

While bringing up three young children she is completing a B.A. degree, choosing subjects such as languages, fine arts and anthropology. Her particular interest is Indonesian.

REX ENNIS

Rex works as an Adult Education Worker in the Workplace Basic Education Project at the Council of Adult Education. As well as tutoring in Workplace classes, he organises tutor induction and co-ordinates curriculum development activities.

His background in education includes primary, secondary and tertiary teaching in Australia, England and Canada. He feels privileged to have been involved in education in so many varied settings and looks forward to extending that experience further.

When not working in education Rex grows vegetables, rides a bike, fishes and enjoys being part of a happy and supportive family.

BARBARA GOULBORN

Barbara completed a Sociology degree at the London School of Economics, then trained as a primary teacher.

Barbara began teaching Adult Literacy in evening classes in London in 1976, attending Westminster College part-time to take a course in Teaching Literacy Skills to Adults.

Since arriving in Melbourne in 1984, she has taught Adult Literacy at Preston TAFE, co-ordinated a voluntary program at Coburg, worked as an Education Officer in the CAE's Literacy Program and currently teaches Literacy and Basic Education at Broadmeadows College of TAFE, also co-ordinating the voluntary tutor program there.

She lives in Northcote and in her spare time enjoys designing, making and exhibiting quilts and turning concrete into native gardens.

ROSA McKENNA

Rosa completed a B.A. and Diploma of Education at La Trobe University, and joined the Department of Education as an English as a Second Language and Humanities teacher. She has taught at various technical schools including Tottenham Technical School. Here she became involved in a literacy program that flowed into general community activities at the school community house, where she developed many extra curricular activities.

She set up the adult literacy program and after school study program. In 1983 she was appointed as Regional Adult Literacy Co-ordinator in the Western Region.

Her focus is kept sharper through being involved in teaching a group. The questions of what students want to learn and how they best learn are as critical as ever for Rosa.

HELENA SPYROU

Helena Spyrou was born in Zaire. Her childhood was spent in Southern Soudan, Cyprus and Greece before settling in Australia at age 10. With a BA in English and a Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education, Helena taught Humanitites and Literacy at Footscray Technical School. Five years were spent travelling and working in Africa, the Middle East and Europe before teaching Adult Literacy in Bristol, England. Here she worked with a team of teachers developing a literacy program for long term unemployed adults whilst simultaneously completing a number of short courses on the teaching of literacy skills to adults.

In 1988 Helena returned to Melbourne to a position as a Community Based Adult Literacy Co-ordinator at Flemington Neighbourhood House and also sessional work in the Workplace Basic Education Program at the Council of Adult Education. Currently she is completing a B.Ed. to consolidate her teaching skills and educational philosophy.

AILEEN TRELOAR

Aileen began as a literacy tutor with CAE in 1977. She subsequently co-ordinated the Glenroy/Broadmeadows program and led tutor workshops. Her present position is Adult Literacy and Basic Education Officer in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

She is a past president of the Victorian Adult Literacy Council. She is currently a member of the Australian Council of Adult Literacy executive as the UNESCO delegate and represents ACAL on the UNESCO committee for the Asian Pacific Program of Education for All (APPEAL).

As a literacy worker she is particularly concerned with exploring what it means to work with a learner support model. What unchallenged assumptions do both teacher and student bring to the learning situation? What does teaching have to do with learning? What sort of texts help new readers? How can we help learning to read and write to be a creative energy giving experience? She does not know the answers to any of these questions but intends to spend the next few years trying to find out.

In her private life Aileen enjoys her family and friends, playing in the kitchen, toiling in the garden, and being by and in water, salt or fresh, moving or still.